ComTrac/DOS Documentation

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Melchior Thompson & Associates
170 West Poplar Avenue
San Mateo, CA 94402-1152

ComTrac Overview 1
ComTrac Main Menu 1
ComTrac Data Entry Conventions 1
Report Destinations 2

New Comics Module 3
Use NC Master List 3
Update Comics Sales 4
Make Count Form 4
Transfer Cmx to Spc 4
Cycle Sheet Report 4
Stale Comics Report 5
Out of Stock Report 5
Analyze Cmx Sell-Through Report 5
Purge Late Comics Report 5
Comics Title Listing Report 5
Top Comics Seller Report 5

Reserves Module 6
Maintain Files Menu 6
Title File 6
Customers File 7
Order File 7
Dropped Customer File 8
Archive Customer Tool 8
Rental File 8
Perform Jobs Menu 9
Update New Arrivals 9
Reset End-of-Week 9
Reset Duplicate Titles 9
Address Tasks 10
Make Mail Labels 10
List Birthdates 10
Create Subscriber Barcodes 10
Special Interests by Customer 10
Subscriber Telephone/E-mail list 10
Find Expiring Subscribers 10
List Cust/Title Orders 10
ZAP Customer/Title 11
Change Product/Custs 11
Copy Current Orders 11
Upload/Download Files 11
Xfer Comx->Reserves 12
Use Special Interest 12
Assign Special Interest Codes 12
Generate Orders 12
Do Reports 13
Reserve Customer Report 13
Full Customer Listing 13
Partial Summary Sub Listing 13
Store Summary Sub List 13
Res Title Pull Report 13
Title by Store (Summary) 13
Title by Customer 13
Customer by Title 13
Make Subscription Form 13
Print Reserve Files 14
Update/Report Sub Pickups 14
Rental Reports 14
Rental Report 14
Customer Rental Report 14
Late Rental Report 14
Rental Item Report 14

Bar-Code Labels 14
Special Orders 15
Add Special Order 15
Pick Special Orders 15
Enter Payments 15
Special Order Reports 16
Maintain Orders 16
Purge Order 16
Want List 16
Use Want List 16
Purge Want List 16
Print Want List 16

Specialties Module 17
Use SPC Master List 17
Use SPC Cycle Sheets 17
Enter SPC Data 17
Creating SPC Entries 17
Updating Manual SPC Sales 17
Updating SPC Inventory 17
Make Out-of-Stock Report 17
Make Stale Mdse Report 18
Best Seller Report 18
Make Spc Inv Form 18
Reset SPC Master 18
Barcode Labels 18

Back Issue (Collectibles) Module 19
Maintain Master Commons 19
Maintain Common Bak Issue/Maintain Common Bak Iss Inventory 19
Maintain High-Value 19
Enter New Bak Inv 19
Enter Bak Sales 19
Trans Cmx->Bak 20
Barcode Labels 20
Update Master Bak 20
Price List 20
Want List 20

Orders Module 21
Order Mdse 21
Normal Order 21
Advance Reorder 21
Delete Order in Progress 22
Balance Existing Orders 22
Login/Out Mdse 22
Manual Login 23
QuickLog 23
QuickLog with Electronic Invoice 24
Transfer Mdse 24
Level Stock 24
Xfer/Audit Reports 24
Summary 24
Audit 24
Picklist 25
Sum Multi-Order 25
Load/Zap Forms 25
Order Form Report 25
Maintain Form 25
Assign Codes 25
Inventory Level Report 26
Profitability Report 26

Utilities Module 27

Maintain Tables 27
Folder Tables 27
Store File 27
BakIssue Grades 27
Genre Codes 27
Special Interest Codes 27
Projects (and Members) 27
Ordering Tables 27
Vendor File 28
Pub/Mfr File 28
Dept Code File 28
Master Cat File 28
Open Orders File 28
Currency File 28
Rental Tables 28
Ratings File 28
Rental Prices 28
Pack Files 28
Index Files 28
Set System Values 29
Store Info 29
Inventory Info 29
DOS Printer 29
POS Info 29
Rental Information 29
Misc Info 30
Set Printers 30
Purge Files 30
Change Title 30
DBU 31
Create PLU 31
Sales Update/POS 31
Handscan Update 32
DOS Shell 32

Special Topics 33
Adding a DOS Printer to ComTrac 33
| Option 33
Creating Department Codes for ComTrac & POS 34
Enter Departments in Department Table 34
Assign Departments to Merchandise 34
Transfer Departments to POS 34
Consolidating Sales, &c. 34
Creating Subscriber Lists on New Comics Day 35
Cycling New Comics Sales - Manually and POS 36
Manual Updating 36
POS Cycle Sheeting 37
Daily ComTrac Tasks 38
Back Up Your Data 38
Generate PLU Table 38
Import POS Sales History 38
Editing Config.Sys to Add the Dos Memory Manager 39
End-of-Day Closing Routine for POS 40
Generate Reports 40
Journal Tape 40
Dept Sales 40
Sales Tax by Dept 40
Subscriber Bonus Points 40
Time Clock 40
Balance Drawer 41
Export Sales History File 41
Log Out 41
Evaluating Store Performance Ratios 42
Number of Subscribers 42

Customer Transactions per Week 42
Average Customer Transaction: Store-Wide 42
Average Customer Transaction: By Department 42
Sales per Square Foot: Store-Wide 42
Sales per Square Foot: By Department 42
Sales per Employee-Hour-Worked 42
Cost of Goods Sold 43
Inventory Turnover Rate 43
Extract.Exe: Free-form Data Analysis for POS Users 44
Fixing ComTrac & POS Internal Errors 45
Generate a Cycle Sheet Count Form 46
Generating Barcodes in ComTrac 47
Epson-Compatible Dot Matrix Printers 47
Hewlett Packard Laser or Inkjet Printers 47
Seiko Ez-30 Label Printer 47
Eltron Label Printer 47
Our Recommendations 48
Pre-Printed Barcode Labels 48
Generating Genre or Family Codes 49
Creating Your Own Genre Codes 49
Assigning Genre Codes to Groups of Products 49
Getting ComTrac Started 50
Install ComTrac 50
The Store Table 50
The Department Table 50
Install POS 50
Create/Export ComTrac Data 50
Import the Diamond Order Forms 51
Log in Merchandise 51
Doing an Initial Comics Inventory 51
Doing an Initial Specialties Inventory 52
Adding Additional Specialties or Comics Inventory 52
Entering Common Back Issue Comics 52
Entering High-Value Back Issue Comics 52
Load Order Forms 62
Zap Order Forms 62
Update Sub Title File 62
Make Subscription Form 62
Analyze Comics Sell-Through 62
Copy Current Orders 62
Upload/Download Files 62
Order Comics 62
Order Specialties 62
Balance Orders 62
Sum Multi-Order 63
Make Stale Mdse Report 63
Re-Price Back Issues 63
Data from Store to Office/Home 66
Data from Office/Home to Store 66
Short Cycle or Full Cycle? 67
First-Week Sales 67
Last-Week Inventory 68
Ordering to Sell Out 68
Identifying Growing or Decaying Titles 69
Changes in Subscriber Patterns 69
Rapid Sell-Through for Small-Count Titles 69
Lengthening Sell-Through for Small-Count Titles 69
Pay-as-you-Go or Prepaid Subscriptions 70
One-Shot or Standing Order Systems 70
Special Orders/One Time Orders 70
Want Lists 71
Ordering Comics 71
Subscribers 71
Newsstand Sales 71

Back Issue Copies 71
Ordering Specialties from a Comics Distributor 72
Ordering Specialties from a Specialty Distributor 72
Ordering Specialties from a Manufacturer/Publisher 73
Company-Wide Ordering vs. Store Ordering 73
The Law of Large Numbers 73
I Don t Have a Central Warehouse 73
No Free Lunches! 74
Company-Wide Ordering & POS 74
Enter Your Store Code into ComTrac 80
Now you are ready to start entering customers. 80
Preparing the Reserve (Subscriber) Title File 81
Now you are ready to enter Customer Orders. 81
Make Count Form 84
Update Comics Sales 84
Stale Comics Report 84
Out-of-Stock-Report 84
Re-Order Comics 84
Transfer Comics 84
Make Count Form 84
Update Comics Sales 84
Stale Comics Report 84
Out-of-Stock-Report 85
Re-Order Comics 85
Transfer Comics 85
Maintain Subscriber File 85
Create Subscriber List 85
Maintain Reserve Order File 85
Dropping Subscribers 85
Archive/Restore Subscribers 85
Import Diamond Invoice File 85
Update New Arrivals 85
ZAP Customer/Title Orders 85
Work with Special Orders 86
Recall Subscriber Orders 86
Generate Title by Store Summary 86
Generate Title by Customer List 86
Generate Customer by Title List 86
Update & Report on Subcriber Pickups 86
Create Inventory Form 86
Enter Specialty Sales 86
Log-in New SPC Mdse 86
Make Out-Stock Report 86
Transfer Specialties 86
Create Transfer List 87
Order Specialties 87
Maintain High-Value Issues 87
Enter New Common Back-Issue Inventory 87
Enter Common Sales 87
Enter High-Value Sales 87
Transfer from Comics 87

1.0. ComTrac Overview

ComTrac/DOS consists of two programs: ComTrac and Point-of-Sale (POS). ComTrac contains all the ordering and inventory control tools required to manage your inventory and provide services to customers; POS serves as the cash register and data capture tool for ComTrac.

1.1. ComTrac Main Menu

When you load ComTrac, you will see an opening screen containing version information and the amount of free hard disk available to you. After a moment (you can speed this process by pressing any key) you will see the Main Menu screen.

The Main Menu screen stretches horizontally across your screen and contains the following menu options:

- New Comics	Provides access to the periodical merchandise module
- Reserves	Provides access to the customer, subscription and special order module
- Specialties	Provides access to the reorderable merchandise module
- Back Issues	Provides access to the collectibles module
- Orders	Provides access to ordering and data maintenance tools
- Utilities	Provides access to a wide variety of system maintenance tools
- Exit	Provides access to Backup and Restore, also Exit to DOS (Windows)

ComTrac does not support the use of a mouse, although POS does. You can move through these menus by using the right and left arrow keys or the up and down arrow keys, followed by pressing the **Enter** key. You can also use hotkeys to select menu items. The first character of each menu item is the hotkey. For example, press **"U"** to select the Utilities menu if you are in the Main Menu.

1.2. ComTrac Data Entry Conventions

All ComTrac data entry menus are identical. Some spreadsheet-style data tools have different menu commands, their commands are documented in the User Manual in the section which deals specifically with those tools.

The standard ComTrac data maintenance menu consists of these options:

- Add	Allows you to ADD an entry to the file
- Change	Allows you to CHANGE an existing entry
- Delete	Marks the highlighted entry for DELETION
- Undelete	Unmarks the highlighted entry for DELETION
- Find	Allows you to FIND an entry elsewhere in the file
- Next	Moves you to the NEXT entry in the file
- Previous	Moves you to the PREVIOUS entry in the file
- Return	Returns you to the PREVIOUS menu (or press the Escape key)
- Exit	Exits you from ComTrac to DOS or your Windows desktop

In all data maintenance screens you can exit directly from the screen by pressing the PageDown key once or twice. Pressing the Escape key will normally return you to the previous menu and abandon any changes you were making.

When you select the FIND command, you will be prompted to enter search values. If you leave the search value prompts empty and press PageDown or press Enter to exit them, a drop-down data window will appear.

You can move through these data windows by pressing the UP or DOWN arrow keys, the PAGE-UP or PAGE-DOWN keys, or by SEARCHING. If you want to SEARCH within a drop-down data window, press the "?" key and respond to the search value prompts. Wild cards do not work with these prompts. If you want to find a title, for example, which starts with the letters "X-", just enter those characters and exit the prompt fields. The data window will redisplay beginning at the first occurence of these values.

1.3. Report Destinations

All ComTrac reports (except for a few wide reports) can be routed to Screen, Printer or File. Reports that are routed to Screen are one-way, you cannot backup and re-examine a previous page.

If you route a report to file, you must specify a 1-8 character file name followed by a period and a 1-3 character extension. For example, CYCLE.RPT might be your name for a cycle sheet report that you send to file. When you look for the report file, you'll find it in your default ComTrac folder, normally COMTRAC.

When you print a report file, be sure to specify a monospace font such as COURIER and use a small point size in the 8-10 point range. Also minimize your margins using the SET PAGE command to 0.5" or less.

Note:
Some printers are so-called "Windows Printers", and cannot print output from DOS applications because their windows printer drivers are poorly written. If you have such a printer, you must route all your reports to file for printing. If you don't have a word processor such as WordPerfect or Word, go to **Start | Programs | Accessories | WordPad** to get access to a built-in editor. (Windows 95 only has Notepad, which will also work).

2.0. New Comics Module

The New Comics module contains all the tools that you need to maintain your periodicals inventory. We define periodicals as any product that has multiple sequential occurences, such as most comics. Magazines also fall into this category.

Reorderable comics (such as ***Hate***), trade paperbacks, graphic novels and other reorderable products belong in the Specialties module.

The New Comics module contains the following tools:

2.1. Use NC Master List

The New Comics Master List provides you with access to the Master Entry for each unique combination of Title and Issue. As a rule, you will never have to physically create an entry for a comic product in this location. When you order a comic product through ComTrac in the Orders module, an entry in this file is created automatically when you are done with the ordering process.

2.2. Use NC Cycle Sheets

The New Comics Cycle Sheet provides you with access to the Cycle Sheet for each unique combination of Title and Issue at a single location. That is, if you have two or more locations, you would have two cycle sheet entries for every combination of Title and Issue. The first cycle sheet will contain ordering and inventory data for the first location, the other cycle sheet will contain ordering and inventory data for the second location.

This allows you to monitor sales at each location as well as to transfer merchandise from one location to another.

As a rule, you will never have to physically create an entry for a comic product in this file. When you order a comic product through ComTrac in the Orders module, an entry in this file is created automatically when you are done with the ordering process.

The most important fields in the Cycle Sheet file are:

- Notes — Any notes made here will appear on the Ordering screen if this cycle sheet is being used in calculating order quantities for a comic title. You normally enter this information during the ordering process rather than afterwards.
- Status — Comics cycle sheets are either ON-ORDER ("O"), ACTIVE (no code) or PULLED ("R"). This value is normally set by ComTrac.
- Start (date) — This is the first day this product went on sale.
- Shelf Wks — This is the number of weeks you want this product to be on sale. When a product is past its shelf date, ComTrac nags you to remove the book from the rack.
- Pull (date) — This is the day on which you normally remove any leftover copies from the rack. Leftover copies can be transferred into the Back Issue module.

- Omit — We call this the ***Death of Superman*** field. If a unique Title-Issue is so abnormal that using it in calculations would bias your order quantities, setting the value of this field to "Y" screens it out of calculations. You normally set this value during the ordering process.

2.3. Update Comics Sales

If you are not using POS, you will have to update your comics sales manually using this tool with the MANUAL option. If you use POS, you should use this tool every week in POS mode. See **Cycling New Comics Sales** elsewhere in this Manual for more detail.

2.4. Make Count Form

Whether you are using POS or not, you need to generate this report weekly so you will know what comics titles are scheduled to come off the rack. If you don't use POS, select the MANUAL option, otherwise select the POS option.

When you are prompted to enter this week's cycle date, enter the calendar date BEFORE the actual day you would cycle your comics manually or pull them from the rack. (It's due to the way computers calculate dates...)

"Do You Want Specific Weeks Highlighted?"
Answer NO unless you manually cycle on non-continous weeks, such as the 1st, 3rd and last week of the cycle.

"Do You Order by Genre?"
Answer NO unless you display your comics by Genre/Family and want your Count Form to be sorted by Genre/Family, Title and Issue.

2.5. Transfer Cmx to Spc

You may find that you have inadvertantly routed some products to the Comics Module instead of the Specialties Module. Or, you may want to track sales for the first five weeks of a product and then transfer it to the Specialties Module for routine re-ordering.

When you use this tool a window will appear with every comics product displayed in it. Tag the items you want to transfer by pressing the SPACEBAR or PLUS key for a highlighted item. You'll see a checkmark to the left of the product indicating that it's been selected for transfer. To untag an item, move the highlight bar to it and press SPACEBAR or PLUS key again and the checkmark will disappear.

When you exit the window ComTrac will prompt you to specify certain information (such as the new department code) for each transferred item.

2.6. Cycle Sheet Report

ComTrac users once relied heavily on the Cycle Sheet Report, but with the passage of time most users need to use it only rarely. If you do need to print out detailed cycle sheet information for one or more titles, use this tool.

2.7. Stale Comics Report

This report generates a list of all comics titles that are past their scheduled pull date and have inventory on the shelf. It's used mostly by owners to keep track of what their managers are doing.

2.8. Out of Stock Report

This report generates a list of all ACTIVE comics titles that have zero quantity in inventory. You could use this to help with re-orders, though given the low level of over-printing it's not likely to be very useful.

This report's main purpose is to identify books in their first week of sales that are out of stock, primarily so you can transfer product from one location to another.

2.9. Analyze Cmx Sell-Through Report

This report analyzes your comics sales by groups, with each group based on the average number of copies you order. Two groups are 1-5 copies and 100+ copies. The report presents you with detailed information on each group, including the average sell-through rate which is the key to comics profitability.

Sell-through rates of 90%+ are profitable, sell-through rates in the 80's are marginally profitable, and sell-through rates below the 80's are likely to be unprofitable. You can filter your comics data by Location, Start and Ending dates, Publisher, Genre or individual Title.

2.10. Purge Late Comics Report

This tool lets you purge your files of old orders which have not arrived. When you use the tool, ComTrac asks you for a Purge Date. Any books on-order that were ordered prior to that date will be purged from your files.

2.11. Comics Title Listing Report

This report provides you with a listing of all comics titles that are on-order, along with their order date and projected ship date (based on the Diamond order form).

2.12. Top Comics Seller Report

This report generates a list of your 100 best-selling comics. You will be prompted for the range of dates you want to use in preparing the report, and for the number of titles you want in the report. You can specify any number of titles from 1 to 100.

3.0. Reserves Module

The Reserves Module contains all the tools to maintain information about customers, subscriptions and special orders. It contains five subsidiary menus:

- Maintain Files	Provides access to Title, Customer, Orders, Dropped Customers, Archived Customers and Rental File.
- Perform Jobs	Provides access to tools which perform Customer and Subscriber tasks
- Do Reports	Provides access to Subscriber reports, including Pull/Pick Reports
- Special Orders	Provides access to Customer Special Orders
- Want List	Provides access to the Want List file

See the following in this manual for detailed instructions:

- Creating Subscriber Lists on New Comics Day
- Subscribers: Get Them Up and Running
- Start Sub Utility Instructions

3.1. Maintain Files Menu

The Maintain Files menu provides access to six files:

- Title	Contains all titles available to subscribers
- Customer	Contains all customers (including subscribers) that you track
- Orders	Contains all regular comic subscription orders
- Dropped Customer	Contains all dropped customers
- Archive Customer	Contains all archived customers and their order data
- Rental	Contains all rental products

Of these files, the only files that you will work with directly in the normal course of business are the Customer and Orders files. From time to time you may want to add one or two products to the Title file directly, rather than using the transfer tool that's part of the Diamond Order Form import process.

3.1.1. Title File

The Title File contains one entry for each product title or description that you are making available to your customers. If a product isn't in this file, you can't create an order for that product in the Orders File. The only fields that must be defined when you add an entry to this file are Title/Description and Retail Cost. Leave the other fields empty or with their default values. The only time you need to enter the Issue Number is if you are requiring your subscribers to submit a unique order for every item every month. Otherwise leave it blank.

When you import your monthly Diamond order form into ComTrac you will be asked whether you want to electronically update your Reserves Title file. If you say "Yes" (which we recommend) ComTrac will automatically transfer all the items you designate to this file, as long as they aren't already present.

3.1.2. Customers File

The Customers File contains basic information about all of your customers. Non-POS users will usually just enter their subscriber customers, and perhaps a few customers who they want to have on a mailing list. POS users will benefit by entering information about as many customers as possible regardless of their subscriber status.

In POS, you cannot rent merchandise to customers unless they are in the Customer file. Further, every item you sell to a customer will be recorded and stamped with their customer code if you have the customer in this file and if you pick them from the file when you start a transaction for them. The information that you can gain from this is invaluable.

The most important fields in the Customers file are:

- Sub Type — The default (I) is for In-Store customers. The other codes are "M" for Mail-order customers and "L" for Mailing-label customers. "L" customers don't appear on any drop-down selection window involving customers. I'd assign all non-subscriber customers to the "L" category.
- Mem Type — Membership Club type. The legal values are S, V, P and none. Most of you don't use multi-level clubs, so you'll leave this empty. The three letter codes tie into the POS Department Code table, and control discounts by department based on club status.
- Rental Cust — Enter "Y" or "N" depending on whether the customer is going to be a rental customer. If you enter "Y", be sure to enter the customer's birthdate later in the file, so ComTrac can check whether rental products are age-appropriate or not at the register.
- Discount — Enter the percent discount for the customer. It'll be applied automatically when you ring up the customer's subscriber products at the register.
- Mem # — Optional. Most users don't use this field.
- Sp Interest — Special Interest codes are used for target marketing and to deal with special ordering requests ("All Marvel #1s"). See Utilities|Maintain Tables|Folder Tables|Special Interest for more details.

3.1.3. Order File

The Order File contains subscription orders for comics products. There are two kinds of subscriber orders: "standing" and "one-time". A standing order for a product is ordered every time the product is solicited from Diamond. One-time orders are ordered only once, normally for a single issue or for a range of issues. Orders for non-comic products are best entered in the Special Orders file.

The most important fields in the Order File are:

- Cust Code — When entering the first order of a group for a customer, erase any value in the field and enter the first 2-4 characters of the customer's last name, press Enter and select the customer from a drop-down window. All the subsequent order entries will come up with their customer code as the default.
- Title/Desc — Enter the first few characters of the title and press Enter, then select the product from a drop-down window.

- Start Issue — If this is a one-time order, enter the starting issue number and press Enter.

- End Issue — If you entered a Start Issue, the default value will be the same issue number. You can modify it if you desire. Be sure that there are leading zeroes to fill up the field.

Note:
If you have no Start Issue and enter an End Issue, ComTrac will order this product till the final issue number that you entered. If you have beginning and ending issue numbers, ComTrac will only order those issues. Further, ComTrac will only include this product in the Pick List for the customer if the arriving issue qualifies as one they want.

- Qty — Enter the number of copies the customer wants. If the customer wants an extra copy of a specific issue, add a new order for that product, beginning and ending with just that issue number.

Note:
ComTrac automatically purges one-time orders when they arrive in your store and are printed out on that week's Pick List.

3.1.4. Dropped Customer File

The Dropped Customer file contains basic information on every customer that was Dropped by using Reserves|Perform Jobs|Zap Customer/Title. This allows you to screen new subscriber applications for people who were problem subscribers in the past.

3.1.5. Archive Customer Tool

This tool lets you archive or un-archive customers, their subscriber orders and their special orders. Some users like to archive their college students in June when they go home for summer vacation, and unarchive them in the Fall. Archiving saves all the data associated with the customer and makes them inactive, so they don't appear on your Pick Lists and aren't included in any order totals.

3.1.6. Rental File

The Rental File contains information on every product that you rent, whether it's a video or a game cartridge or DVD. You must have an entry in the Specialties file for a product before you can add it into the Rental File. When you add an item to the Rental File, it is taken out of the saleable inventory in Specialties and is assigned a unique identifier in the Rental File for tracking purposes. (You may have multiple copies of the same tape or game, and need to know which unit has been rented by whom...)

When you Add a new item to the Rental File, enter the first few characters of the Title/Description and press Enter, then select the proper item from a drop-down window.

3.2. Perform Jobs Menu

There are a number of jobs that are involved in using and maintaining a subscriber service. We've grouped them in a single menu for convenience.

3.2.1. Update New Arrivals

If you have subscribers, you need to process each week's shipment from Diamond so your customers get they books they ordered. If you've imported your electronic weekly invoice through Orders|Login Mdse|QuickLog and then updated your arrivals, most of your subscriber books have been pre-checkmarked already. Because Diamond has problems in consistently spelling their product descriptions, you still need to go to this tool and review the books that have come in. If you don't use the electronic invoice, you start the process here and not in Orders|Login Mdse.

You will see a drop-down window containing all the titles that your customers have on order, whether only one copy is on-order or many. Take your invoice and go through the comics titles, checkmarking every title that has arrived.

Note:
You won't necessarily find every comics title on your invoice in the drop-down window. Why? Because only titles *that have subscribers will appear in the drop-down window!*

Checkmark an item by pressing the SPACEBAR or PLUS key when the highlight bar is on the title. A checkmark will appear to the left of the item in the window. You can un-checkmark an item by pressing SPACEBAR or PLUS key when the highlight bar is on a checkmarked item.

Then exit the window. ComTrac will check for any titles that have one-time orders. If there are one-time orders, you'll be prompted to enter the issue number of the arrived title. Be sure that there are leading zeroes (eg: 0010). When you're done, you're ready to print out Pick Lists.

If you used Diamond's electronic invoice, all your Special Orders have been pre-flagged for picking. If you didn't, go to Reserves|Special Orders|Pick Orders and log in specialty items that arrived before printing your Pick Lists.

3.2.2. Reset End-of-Week

ComTrac prompts you to Reset your reserves module at the end of the Title-by-Customer and Customer-by-Title pick reports. Resetting purges any one-time products that have reached their last issue number and reflags all standing orders for next week's picking cycle. If you didn't reset during the pick list process, you can force resetting by using this tool.

3.2.3. Reset Duplicate Titles

If you have duplicate titles in your Reserve module, use this tool to consolidate them into single entries.

3.2.4. Address Tasks

There are a number of tools which are available to perform certain address tasks using your customer data. They are:

3.2.4.1. Make Mail Labels

This tool lets you create mailing labels for your customers.

3.2.4.2. List Birthdates

This tool lets you print a list or mailing labels for all customers whose birthdate falls within the specified period you enter. Many users like to send customers a small gift certificate before their birthday.

3.2.4.3. Create Subscriber Barcodes

This tool lets you create barcode labels for your customers. These labels can be placed on a credit-card sized card and laminated, so your customers can present the card when they come to the POS register. This lets you scan them in, which simplifies the customer look-up process.

3.2.4.4. Special Interests by Customer

This tool lets you generate a list or mailing labels for customers based on their Special Interest Codes. If you wanted to send a flyer to all customers who were interested in Fantasy & Role-Playing Games, and you'd created a Special Interest Code for this group and assigned it to the customers who belonged in the group; you'd use this tool.

Be sure to look at Reserves|Perform Jobs|Work with Special Interest Codes to see how you can easily assign a Special Interest Code to groups of customers.

3.2.4.5. Subscriber Telephone/E-mail list

This report produces a list of customer's telephone numbers and e-mail addresses.

3.2.4.6. Find Expiring Subscribers

This report produces a list of subscribers whose membership expires within a given date range. Most users don't use time-sensitive memberships any more, but if you do, keep the membership information in Reserves|Customers current.

3.2.5. List Cust/Title Orders

You will need to produce a list of which books have been ordered by a single customer, or which customers have ordered an individual book. (Special orders aren't included in these lists). A special feature of the Customer by Title list is that you can sort the output by the date on which each customer first ordered the title. If you are short-shipped on a book, you can print out this list and use it to fairly allocate product to customers. Draw a line through the list before the first customer who didn't receive their order, and if you can get more copies use this sheet to make sure they get what they ordered.

3.2.6. ZAP Customer/Title

Don't delete customers from the Customer file or titles from the Title file. Use this tool to remove a customer (and all their orders) from ComTrac, or use the tool to remove a Title (and all the orders associated with it) from ComTrac.

When you Zap a customer, you'll be asked to enter a "Drop Code". This can be any code you want, or none at all. This code will become part of the Dropped Customer entry so you will know later why you dropped the customer. Examples might include: MOVE for moved, BAD or LATE for problem customers, etc.

3.2.7. Change Product/Custs

This tool lets you make changes to Products and Customers. If you select Products, you can globally change the retail price or you can recall (reverse the weekly pick list flagging process) for the item you select. If you select Customers, you can Drop the customer (this selects the Zap Customer tool), Transfer them to another location, or change their status from In-Store to Mail-Order.

3.2.8. Copy Current Orders

A number of comics titles come out in mini-groups of issues, and then start over again with a slightly different title. Most of your customers will want to subscribe to the new mini-series. This tool lets you block-copy orders for one title to a new title. For example, let's say Alien Vs. Predator: Colonial Marines is at issue #2. Alien vs. Predator: The Next Title is being solicited and it's been added to our Reserves Title file. If we select Colonial Marines we'll create an entirely new set of orders for "The Next Title".

3.2.9. Upload/Download Files

Multi-store users often need to consolidate the subscriber and special order data for each store at their central PC. These tools allow satellite locations to create export files from Reserves that can be e-mailed or sent on diskette to the central location. The central location can then import these files. All the export files are in zipped (compressed) format, and the default location will be "C:\COMTRAC" if that's what you set in **Utilities|Set System Values|POS Info.**

When you import data from a satellite location, all the current information for that location will be stripped out of ComTrac and then replaced with the new information. This shouldn't be a problem, normally, since adds/drops/changes should only occur at the originating location.

- Mass Import	Exports all files in zipped format.
- Mass Export	Imports all files in zipped format.
- Import Titles	Exports just the title file. **
- Export Titles	Imports just the title file.
- Export Rental History	Exports Rental history data. ***
- Import Rental History	Imports Rental history data.

** This is useful if you want to standardize title spellings throughout multiple stores. Have the central location maintain the Reserves Title file and distribute it weekly or monthly to your satellite locations.

*** This is useful if your stores all rent products and you want to be able to analyze rental history at your central location.

3.2.10. Xfer Comx->Reserves

You will usually update your Reserves Title file at the end of the process by which you import your monthly Diamond order form into ComTrac. If you forgot to do it, you can force ComTrac to do it as a separate action.

We recommend that you let ComTrac do most of the heavy lifting when you use this tool. Let ComTrac pre-mark all comics products for you and otherwise just press the Enter key when you're in the data windows to accept what ComTrac does.

3.2.11. Use Special Interest

If you use Special Interest codes to group customers for marketing or ordering purposes, the two tools located here will be very useful to you.

3.2.11.1. Assign Special Interest Codes

While you can assign special interest codes to customers one at a time as you enter customers into ComTrac, what do you do when you create a new code? This tool lets you select a special interest code from the Special Interest table (found in Utilities|Maintain Tables|Folder Table) and assign it to customers through a drop-down window.

The drop-down window will display all your customers. Checkmark each customer who you want to receive this special interest code by pressing SPACEBAR or the PLUS key. Then exit the window and ComTrac will update all their entries.

3.2.11.2. Generate Orders

When you select this option, ComTrac checks the Special Interest Code file and will return you to the menu if there are no entries with a special interest code.

If there are codes, it will step you through every code in the file, asking whether you want to create orders based on this code. If you say "Yes", you'll be asked to checkmark the titles that you want to generate orders for in connection with this special interest code. Scroll through the window and checkmark items buy pressing SPACEBAR or the PLUS key. Exit the window when you are done, and ComTrac will create one-time orders for every item you marked for every customer with that special interest code. If an order already exists for an item you checked ComTrac will not create a new order.

3.3. Do Reports

We provide a number of reports so you can manage and analyze customer and subscriber data.

3.3.1. Reserve Customer Report

We provide three customer reports.

3.3.1.1. Full Customer Listing

This report generates a complete listing of each customer's data and their subscription orders.

3.3.1.2. Partial Summary Sub Listing

This report generates a 1-line summary listing for each customer at each location.

3.3.1.3. Store Summary Sub List

This report generates a 1-line summary listing for the customers at each location.

3.3.2. Res Title Pull Report

The heart of any subscriber system is producing lists of products which have arrived in your store and need to be processed so customers receive them in a timely manner.

3.3.2.1. Title by Store (Summary)

This report generates a 1-line summary of the number of copies that subscribers have ordered for each title or product in the Reserve Customer Orders file.

It is most commonly used on New Comics Day to split your new arrivals into two piles, one for the rack and one to be split up by customer for subscribers.

The other common use for this report is to generate a document which is used to double-check that all the appropriate comics titles in your Diamond comics order match up with your subscribers. You should do this because your Reserves Title file may have differing spellings than this month's Diamond order form.

3.3.2.2. Title by Customer

This report generates a pull list in Customer order, with all the comics products that arrived this week listed below the customer. If there were Special Orders for the customer in this weeks shipment, they should appear here as well. If you have mail-order customers, you can use this report to generate both picking lists and invoices for these orders.

3.3.2.3. Customer by Title

This report generates a pull list in Title order, with all the Customers who subscribed for the item listed below the customer.

3.3.3. Make Subscription Form

This tool creates either a printout or an ASCII text file, containing all the Titles in your Reserve Title file that are checkmarked with with "Y" under the **Sub Form** header. Some ComTrac users generate this form (or modify the text file) and give it to their customers so they can checkmark the items they want to order.

3.3.4. Print Reserve Files

This menu gives you access to the files in your Reserves module so you can print them to screen, file or printer.

3.3.5. Update/Report Sub Pickups

This tool allows you to check mark all customers who came in during the previous week and picked up subscription materials. After you've checkmarked the customers and left the drop-down customer window, ComTrac will update their customer entries with today's date.

When this is done, ComTrac will generate a report showing you which customers have not been into to pick up their subscriptions in "X" weeks.

If you are a POS user and have all your subscribers in the Customer file ***and*** look up your customers at the POS register, ComTrac automatically updates this field when you update your inventory from POS. If you are a POS user, don't checkmark any customers and just exit the drop-down customer window to go to the report feature.

3.3.6. Rental Reports

Rentals have become a key merchandise line for many ComTrac users. These reports allow you to generate key rental management reports:

3.3.6.1. Rental Report

The Rental Report can be generated by Department, Type or Rating. You can also generate each report by Summary or Detail forms. This report provides you with the total units that were rented, the total Rental fees, Late fees and Total Amount Paid.

3.3.6.2. Customer Rental Report

The Customer Rental Report generates a complete history of what an individual customer has rented from you for a range of dates.

3.3.6.3. Late Rental Report

Their are two versions of this report. The first version is a General Report, which is a listing that shows which customers have rentals that are "X" days late. The second version is a Form Letter which you can send to late customers, telling them that they have late rentals and need to return them to the store.

3.3.6.4. Rental Item Report

This report generates a complete rental history for an individual item. It is most useful when an item has been damaged and you need to trace its rental history so you can determine who damaged it.

3.3.6.5. Bar-Code Labels

This tool allows you to generate barcode labels for rental products.

3.4. Special Orders

Special Orders are one-time orders for non-comics products. We are able to tie each special order in to the unique solicitation number that Diamond uses in their monthly order forms. This gives increased accuracy and reduces the amount of time processing the orders.

3.4.1. Add Special Order

When you add a special order for a customer, you must have created an entry for the customer in the Reserves Customer file and must have imported the appropriate Diamond order form. When you enter the order, you'll have to select the customer from a drop-down window and then select the right order form from another drop-down window, and then select the item from a drop-down window that displays the contents of the order form.

3.4.2. Pick Special Orders

There are three ways to pick special orders on New Comics Day. You can use Diamond's weekly electronic invoice through Orders|Login Mdse, you can use the electronic invoice through Reserves|Special Orders|Pick Special Orders or you can pick them Manually.

If you have imported Diamond's weekly electronic invoice through Orders|Login Mdse and then updated your inventory, you don't need to do anything further to update your Special Order file. It's been done for you.

If you don't use QuickLog in orders you can still use the Diamond weekly electronic invoice in this tool. Select the "Electronic Invoice" option and follow the prompts. All the qualifying items that arrived in the invoice will be marked as having arrived.

Or, you can use the "Manual" option, where you will select Diamond from a drop-down list of distributors. Then select whether you want to update by "Catalog" or "Description". Go through your invoice and enter the qualifying items. (It's simpler of you have already printed out a copy of what's in your Special Order file so you can scan through the invoice for qualifying items).

Note:

Once you've marked all arrived items in the Special Order file, you can either print out a regular subscriber pick list or you can print out the proper Special Order report. If you just print a Pick List, Special Orders will be included only if there is at least one comics item for the customer. If you do a lot of Special Orders, we recommend printing the Special Order report as well as the weekly Pick List. At the end, you'll be asked whether you want to purge all special orders that have arrived. If you've printed your pick list, go ahead. Otherwise wait and use the Purge Special Order tool later.

3.4.3. Enter Payments

If you want to enter partial payments for Special Orders, this tool will let you do the job. You can enter up to four partial payments for any item.

3.4.4. Special Order Reports
There is only one Special Order report, although you can sort it by Title, Customer, Distributor and Order Date. We recommend sorting by Title on New Comics Day so you can quickly scan your invoice for arriving items, if you don't use Diamond's weekly electronic invoice.

3.4.5. Maintain Orders
Use this tool to find and modify an existing Special Order.

3.4.6. Purge Order
This tool will let you purge all special orders that have an arrived date earlier than the purge date you enter in the Purge Date prompt window.

3.5. Want List
The Want List is essentially a notepad file that you can sort by date, department and customer. You can use this file to record information about products that your customers want you to locate for them. It doesn't tie into any other parts of ComTrac's data.

3.5.1. Use Want List
This screen allows you to enter or modify items into the Want List file.

3.5.2. Purge Want List
This tool allows you to purge items from your Want List that have a Found Date.

3.5.3. Print Want List
This generates a Report showing every item in your Want List file, sorted by Customer or Title. Most ComTrac users who print this report generate it in Title order, which gives them a more useable format if they are at a convention or show and are buying merchandise.

4.0. Specialties Module

4.1. Use SPC Master List

The Specialties Master List contains all the basic information that you may want to enter about any given Specialties product. The key fields are:

- Expires — Leave blank except for seasonal merchandise.
- ISBN — Leave blank unless you order from a book distributer like Ingram
- # Per Box — Only use for cards (how many packs per box?)
- Parent — Only use for cards (what box entry matches up with a card pack entry?)

You can skip over all the Rental fields at the bottom by pressing the Page-Down key once or twice. They are needed only for items that you plan on renting at some time.

4.2. Use SPC Cycle Sheets

There should be one Specialty cycle sheet for every product at every location. So if a given product is available for sale at all three locations that you operate, you should have one entry in the Specialties Master List and three entries in the SPC Cycle Sheet file.

4.3. Enter SPC Data

This tool can be used for two purposes: creating new Specialty entries and modifying or updating inventory levels for existing merchandise.

4.3.1. Creating SPC Entries

If you enter the description of an item or a barcode that doesn't exist in ComTrac, you'll get a prompt saying "Not Found: Pick, Create or Quit?". If you choose the "Create" option you can define all the information for a new product.

4.3.2. Updating Manual SPC Sales

This tool is used by a few ComTrac users who don't have POS but track a few product categories sales by writing down what they sale on paper at the register. Later, they use this tool to update their inventory for sales. ***Not recommended!***

4.3.3. Updating SPC Inventory

Use "Enter SPC Data" with the "Update Inventory" option to m ake changes in Specialty inventory levels, usually from a Specialty Inventory Form. Make sure that the "Qty" field is set to "Qty Left" rather than "Qty Sold".

4.4. Make Out-of-Stock Report

The Out-of-Stock Report is useful more for checking up on managers rather than writing an order. You should use the Ordering tool with the "Direct from Inventory" option to identify all items for a specific Distributor that are at or below their scheduled inventory level.

4.5. Make Stale Mdse Report

The Stale Merchandise Report will identify any items that haven't had a sale in the last "XX" days. Stale items should have their reorder point reduced or even set to zero, and then the remaining inventory should be marked down and blown out on sale.

4.6. Best Seller Report

The Best Seller Report generates a report showing what the top "XX' Specialty products are, using either gross sales or percentage of units sold.

4.7. Make Spc Inv Form

You will want to inventory your Specialties inventory periodically, for tax, insurance and shrinkage-detection purposes.

You can generate this inventory form by Publisher/Manufacturer or Department. When you've counted the product, use **Specialties|C-Enter SPC Data** with the "**Qty Remaining**" option to update data.

4.8. Reset SPC Master

This tool is used to update the Specialties Master Title file, to remove "ghost" inventory items (those items with no parent entry), to remove items that have "zero inventory, zero minimum order level, and zero quantity on-order" and to reset the Year-to-Date sales field in January.

4.9. Barcode Labels

This tool allows you to choose items from the Master Specialties Product file and generate barcode labels for them. You will checkmark each item you want to generate barcode labels for, then exit the window. A second window will appear with all the items you checkmarked. If you want to generate barcodes for all of them, press "A" to select "All". If you changed your mind and want to deselect some, only checkmark the items you want.

5.0. Back Issue (Collectibles) Module

The Back Issue module (or Collectibles module) is a shade of its former self. At one time it mattered to used whether they could use "Percent of Mint" to price books, etc.etc. At this time, many users just route their pulled new comics into generic Specialty inventory entries: such as "$1 Back Issues", $2 Back Issues", etc.

The Back Issue module can also be used for any other collectible, such as sports cards or game cards. Once again, we strongly recommend that low-cost items be tracked by the use of generic inventory entries in the Specialties module (eg: 50c Commons) and that you use the High Value file to track expensive individual items.

(See Quarterly ComTrac Tasks...)

5.1. Maintain Master Commons

We recommend that ComTrac users put all their new comics that will be sold as back issues into generic back issue price point entries that are kept in the Specialties module, or, as single-entry items in your High-Value collectibles file in Back Issues.

5.2. Maintain Common Bak Issue/Maintain Common Bak Iss Inventory

You can make changes to a Common Back Issue master entry here. Don't create new common back issues here - use Enter New Bak Inv to do that! The Base Retail price is used only for companies that have multiple stores and who want to price back issues as a percentage of this price, depending on their grade.

In the Common Back Issue Inventory you can modify the Cost or Grade. The Box refers to a warehouse storage location. Most ComTrac users don't bother with this any more - the cost of tracking isn't justified by the profits.

5.3. Maintain High-Value

The High-Value file allows you to enter a single product and record more detailed information about grade, special characteristics, pricing history, etc.

5.4. Enter New Bak Inv

If you are going to enter or create Back Issue inventory for Common back issues, this is the place to do it. Follow the prompts and enter values as required for each item. ComTrac will create a single 1-unit entry in the Common Back Issue Cycle file for every unit you enter in the **Qty** field. So if you enter "6" in the **Qty** field ComTrac will create six entries in the Common Back Issue Cycle file.

5.5. Enter Bak Sales

This tool is no longer available in ComTrac. If you are using POS you will have automatic updates, if you are tracking sales manually it's too laborious to do.

5.6. Trans Cmx->Bak

You will always have some new comics left over at the end of the week when you pull stale comics off the rack to make room for new issues. At the end of the comics sales update process in the New Comics module, you'll be asked whether you want to "Zap the Transfer File?". If you answer with "NO", data for every comic which had any units left will be stored in the Comics-to-Back-Issue transfer file.

When you use this tool, ComTrac will ask you to choose a generic product to transfer comics into. If you have an item like "$1 back issues" in Specialties, you can select it and then checkmark all the comics that you want moved into that slot. Repeat the process till all the left-over comics have been processes into generic inventory entries.

What's left will come up on your screen one item at a time, and you can modify the data before these items are transferred into the High-Value collectibles file.

5.7. Barcode Labels

You can create barcode labels for any back issue item. Select the items you want to create barcode labels for by checkmarking them, then exit from the drop-down window. You'll see just the items you selected in a second window. Press "A" to select "ALL", or just checkmark the ones you want if you changed your mind about any of them.

5.8. Update Master Bak

If the connections between the Master Common Back Issue file and the Common Back Issue Cycle file are damaged, you can restore them by running this tool.

5.9. Price List

This report produces a Price List of all your Back Issues that are in inventory.

5.10. Want List

This report produces a list of all the Back Issues or High Value collectibles where the inventory on hand is less than the minimum quantity you specified earlier.

6.0. Orders Module

The Orders Module contains tools that are used to order products for your business.

6.1. Order Mdse

The Order Merchandise menu gives you access to the four basic ordering choices. *If you want detailed information on ordering, see* **Monthly Comtrac Tasks|Comics Ordering Related Tasks**.

6.1.1. Normal Order

The Normal Order is your regular monthly Diamond order or weekly order from non-Diamond sources. When you choose this tool, you can either create a new order or open an order that is in progress.

Note:
You cannot have two orders for the same store and distributor open at the same time!

You have two choices in writing an order. You can use a Diamond monthly order form that you have imported into ComTrac, or you can write an order based on products currently in ComTrac. The only companies that regularly provide electronic order forms are Diamond Comic Dist. and FM International.

If your distributor or vendor doesn't provide an electronic order form, you can generate an order form through ComTrac based on every item in inventory that has been assigned to them as a Primary, Secondary or Tertiary source.

You also have the choice to do an order for an individual store or for multiple stores that are treated as a single store. If you have multiple stores and only one Diamond account number, you can write individual orders for each store and then consolidate them for transmission to Diamond.

If you write a "company wide" order, you can have ComTrac split your company-wide order into separate store-level orders so when you post your order you'll get unique cycle sheets for each store and product.

If you want detailed information on ordering, see
Monthly Comtrac Tasks|Comics Ordering Related Tasks

6.1.2. Advance Reorder

ComTrac makes doing advance reorders quick and easy. You have two options: Manual or ComTrac-Assisted.

Manual advance reorders are simple. You'll enter partial or complete information about the title you want to submit an advance reorder for, and then select the item from a drop-down window. You'll be prompted for the reorder quantity. That's all.

Advance reorders where ComTrac helps you are a little more complex, but is much more powerful.

If you select this option, ComTrac will go through every cycle sheet for a comic title that's on-order and check the Reserves module to see whether the subscriber quantity has grown since the original order or the most recent re-order.

If there's been a change, ComTrac stops, displays all the relevant data and prompts you to enter the reorder quantity. The default reorder quantity is the difference between what you had and what you currently require.

You don't need to automatically do an advance re-order just because the subscriber count went up. It all depends! If you ordered 50 copies of a book and the subscriber count went from 3 to 6 copies, most retailers wouldn't submit an advance reorder. They'd set the default value to zero and continue. On the other hand, if you ordered 10 copies of a book and your subscribers went from 4 to 7 copies, most retailers would submit an advance reorder.

With either the Manual or ComTrac-Assisted option you'll get a printout of your advance reorders complete with Diamond solicitation numbers when you finish this process. Print it out and use it when telephoning your advance reorders in.

Many ComTrac users run this tool every two weeks or every week, depending on the size and activity level of their subscriber base.

6.1.3. Delete Order in Progress

There are times you may want to remove an entire order from ComTrac before you post it or send it to the distributor. Select the item you want to remove from the drop-down window and the order file will be erased and the pointer in ComTrac to the file will be deleted.

6.1.4. Balance Existing Orders

This is a great tool if you have multiple stores and write individual orders for each store. It's also useful if you have had ComTrac split a single company-wide order into separate orders for each individual location.

What this tool does is let you scroll through these orders, item by item, and make changes in the order quantities for each store. Many ComTrac users find this useful as it helps them make final reductions in order quantities, since they feel they can transfer products from one store to another rather than put additional funds into excess stock.

Once you've gone through and balanced your orders, you can go ahead and open them up and send them to Diamond, print them and Post them.

6.2. Login/Out Mdse

Logging merchandise into ComTrac can be done in three ways: Manual, QuickLog and Electronic Invoice/QuickLog.

6.2.1. Manual Login

Manual Login is best used for ComTrac users who are just getting their system up and running. You won't have many items in inventory yet, and will have to create inventory entries for most of the items you are logging in.

With Manual Login, you select your store and merchandise category that you want to log in for. You must select either Comics or Specialties as your merchandise category. You can log in using barcodes or descriptions. For comics, we recommend using descriptions. For specialties, we recommend using barcodes if the majority of the merchandise is barcoded.

If you are using descriptions, we recommend entering just the first few characters of the description and selecting the product from a drop-down window.

If ComTrac finds them item, it updates the item and you continue. (If the product is a comic, it'll switch the cycle sheet to Active from On-Order, calculate a pull-date and update all the inventory fields). If ComTrac doesn't find the item, you can Create an entry or Pick an entry from a drop-down window.

If you Pick an entry from the drop-down window and discover that there is no matching entry, select any item, exit from the window and tell ComTrac that you don't want to carry out the update. Then do it again and choose Create rather than Pick.

6.2.2. QuickLog

QuickLog is faster and more accurate than Manual Login, but requires that the great majority of your inventory that has arrived has matching inventory entries in ComTrac. If you have been ordering most of your products through ComTrac QuickLog is a good way to proceed.

When you choose QuickLog, you will be prompted to specify the location you are receiving merchandise for and a range of order dates. If you leave the range of order dates with the default of no date to start and today's date to end, you'll get a spreadsheet containing every comic or specialty item that is currently on order.

If you are receiving merchandise that was ordered on a single Purchase Order (this covers most non-Diamond vendors) enter the Order Date as the start and end date and ONLY the items that were ordered that day will come up in the QuickLog spreadsheet.

> ***Note:***
> ***If you go into QuickLog and aren't prompted for location or dates, or if you are using the electronic invoice option and aren't prompted for an invoice it is because there is data already in the QuickLog spreadsheet. You cannot overwrite existing data in QuickLog -- rather you must exit QuickLog and tell ComTrac you want to Zap the contents. The next time you invoke QuickLog you'll be prompted to select an invoice file or enter a location and start and ending dates.***

6.2.3. QuickLog with Electronic Invoice

If you use the Diamond weekly invoice file (the *.DAT version), you can import it into QuickLog. (See the previous page for a note about previously existing data and how it affects loading new data...)

Once you've imported the file you can modify the contents as needed and then go ahead, exit the spreadsheet and tell ComTrac to update inventory.

6.3. Transfer Mdse

Being able to transfer merchandise from one location to another in ComTrac can save you a lot of money. It's usually more profitable to transfer excess merchandise from a slow-selling spot to where it is selling well than it is to order more.

The first step in Transferring merchandise is to select the proper module: Comics, Specialties, Common Back Issues or High-Value (Collectibles).

There are two types of transfers, **Store Initiated** and **Office Initiated** . The only difference between the two types is that an **Office Initiated** transfer produces data that you can generate a picking list from. If a store manager transfers merchandise from their store to another location, you'd use a ***Store Initiated*** transfer to record what happened, *after the fact!* If you are going through inventory at the office and are *initiating transfers* that you want to take place, you'd use the ***Office Initiated*** option.

Then enter the Transfer Date and start selecting products that need to be transferred. Note that you'll see current inventory levels across your company for every location. ComTrac won't let you transfer more product from one location to another than what it knows is in inventory!

If there's no inventory entry at the destination store, ComTrac will create a new entry for you, automatically. *(The "no data" message means that there isn't any record or entry for that item at that location).*

6.4. Level Stock

This tool isn't presently available, but will be reinstated in a future upgrade.

6.5. Xfer/Audit Reports

The Transfer or Audit reports are used to generate Pick Lists for merchandise or to generate reports which summarize the value of merchandise moved from one location to another.

6.5.1. Summary

The Summary Report generates a summary of the piece count, retail value and wholesale value of transferred merchandise between locations. This is useful for people who keep separate books for each location in their business.

6.5.2. Audit

This report generates a detailed list of all transfers (To and From) for a given range of dates for every location in your system.

6.5.3. Picklist

This report generates a merchandise Pick List for all *Office-Initiated* transfers for a range of dates. If you've made a number of transfers and want to create a picking list for the warehouse crew which also doubles as an invoice for the receiving manager, use this report.

6.6. Sum Multi-Order

This tool allows you to take individual store orders for the same Distributor and combine them into a single mega-order. This is commonly used by multi-store comics retailers who want to write individual store orders and combine them for transmission to Diamond.

6.7. Load/Zap Forms

Diamond order forms must be imported into ComTrac before you can use them. See **Importing the Monthly Diamond Order Form** for a detailed, key-by-key set of instructions. You can also remove old order forms from ComTrac by using the Zap command.

6.8. Order Form Report

This report allows you to print out the contents of your Master Order Form file. As this file is likely to be quite large (a single Diamond order has 2,500-3,500 items in it!) we don't recommend doing this - or if you **must** do it, route the output to a text file.

6.9. Maintain Form

In the unlikely event that you need to make changes to an order form once it has been imported into ComTrac, this will give you access to the entries that make up your imported order forms.

Note:
Order forms are just master copies stored in an electronic file drawer. When you start an order using one of these order forms, ComTrac makes a copy to a separate file and THAT is what contains all your order data.

6.10. Assign Codes

ComTrac relies on using certain codes (Departments, Genre/Family, Distributor, Priority), especially in ordering. Most of the time these codes are assigned as users enter inventory into ComTrac for the first time, or as they are logged in for the first time.

There will be times where you will want to reassign groups of products to one of these code groups. This tool lets you do it quickly. Select the code group you want to work with (Departments, Genre/Family, Distributor/Vendor or Priority).

If you are working with Distributors, you'll be asked whether you want to assign products to the Distributor as Primary, Secondary or Tertiary.

You'll also be asked to choose whether you want to assign Comics, Specialties or High-Value collectibles. Then checkmark the items you want assigned and exit the drop-down window. ComTrac will do the rest.

6.11. Inventory Level Report

This report gives you a quick departmental summary of the value of your inventory (piece count, wholesale value and retail value) by individual Location/Store or the entire company. It is very useful for tracking the growth of inventory at each location or the company for accounting and managerial purposes.

6.12. Profitability Report

The profitability report can be run for any range of dates, any location and any department. It generates profitability information based on Point-of-Sales data imported into ComTrac from your POS register(s).

7.0. Utilities Module

The Utilities Module contains tools which are used to tell ComTrac how to behave or to carry out a number of maintenance or housekeeping jobs that are required for the smooth operation of the system.

7.1. Maintain Tables

Tables are critical to the proper operation of ComTrac. The values in tables are used to validate entries in many fields, which ensures that only legal values get into your database. They are used in drop-down windows to perform operations for specific locations.

7.1.1. Folder Tables

Folder Tables contain data that is mostly associated with subscribers and their subscriptions.

7.1.1.1. Store File

The Store File/Table should contain one entry for every location that you store merchandise at. If you have one store you may still have multiple locations at which you have product, such as a Back Room and the Store (which represents the store's sales area).

7.1.1.2. BakIssue Grades

If you don't grade your back issues, you must have one entry in this table where the code field is empty and the word "NONE" is in the code description field.

7.1.1.3. Genre Codes

Genre or Family codes enable users to group products across departments or modules. As an example, you might have a "Batman" genre code that is assigned to all "Batman" products, whether they are comics, trade paperbacks, clothing, mugs, etc

If you don't use genre/family codes, you must have one entry in this table where the code field is empty and the word "NONE" is in the genre/family description field..

7.1.1.4. Special Interest Codes

Special Interest codes are used to group customers for mailing lists or to generate special orders every month. If you don't use special interest codes, you must have one entry in this table where the code field is empty and the word "NONE' is in the special interest description field.

7.1.1.5. Projects (and Members)

Projects are used to define multi-issue series which your customers tend to order as a unit, such as "Zero Hour" from DC Comics several years ago. Once you have defined a "Project" you can create "Members" that are associated with each project. Each member consists typically of a title and issue number.

7.1.2. Ordering Tables

Ordering Tables contain information that is normally associated with writing orders for merchandise.

7.1.2.1. Vendor File
The Vendor File contains entries for each vendor or distributor that you order from. You must have an entry for Diamond Comic Dist. with the code "DIAM". No variations are allowed.

7.1.2.2. Pub/Mfr File
The Publisher/Manufacturer file contains entries for each publisher or manufacturer that you want to track sales, inventory and orders for. You must have an entry where the code is empty and the description is "NONE". This allows you to have a category for products that you don't want to track by publisher or manufacturer.

7.1.2.3. Dept Code File
The Department Code file contains the names of all the departments that you want to use to track inventory, sales and profitability. *You should never have an entry with no code!*

7.1.2.4. Master Cat File
The Master Catalog file contains one entry for each order form that has been imported into ComTrac and has not yet been purged from the system.

7.1.2.5. Open Orders File
The Open Orders file contains one entry for each order that is in progress and has not been posted.

7.1.2.6. Currency File
The Currency file allows you to specify various price points in US Dollars and the corresponding value in your own currency. This feature is most often used by Canadian retailers, where the value of the Canadian dollar varies continually against the US Dollar.

7.1.3. Rental Tables
Rental Tables contain information used in the rental of videotapes and/or game cartridges.

7.1.3.1. Ratings File
The default values in this file are taken from the MPAA for movies. The Age Limit field defines the minimum age that a renter must be to rent an item having this code. If you make sure that every rental customer has a birthdate in the Customer entry, ComTrac and POS will automatically calculate the age of the renter and check it against the code for the item they are renting. If there is an age problem, POS will warn the clerk.

7.1.3.2. Rental Prices
The Rental Price table allows you to define rental prices for each day of the week.

7.2. Pack Files
The Pack Files command allows you to condense any or all files in ComTrac, stripping out any entries that were previously marked for deletion.

7.3. Index Files
The Index Files command allows you to regenerate index files for any or all files in ComTrac. Index files can be damaged by glitches in your power supply, static electricity buildup or by having your PC turned off while ComTrac is running.

7.4. Set System Values

Set System Values allows you to define how ComTrac works.

7.4.1. Store Info

- Default Area Code	Enter the most common area code for your customers
- User Color System	Enter "Y" to have ComTrac work in color
- Country Code	Enter the proper country code, leave blank to see defaults
- Use Res Slot Number	Enter "Y" to use slot numbers, "N" to use last names
- Default Store	Enter your store code if you have one store

7.4.2. Inventory Info

- Avg # Wks Shelf	Enter the average number of weeks you want comics to stay on the shelf as active titles. You can vary shelf length during the ordering process.
- Login Day	Otherwise known as "New Comics Day"
- Inventory Day	The day on which you count and pull comics from the rack
- Last Cycle Date	The last day you cycled your books - maintained by ComTrac. If you enter a date to begin, it'll be a day earlier than the Inventory Day.
- Full/Short Cycle	Full Cycle calculates for every week of the cycle, short cycle prompts counts or pulls only on first and last week. For non-POS users.
- Company/Store Order	Most users choose Store ordering. A few multi-store users choose Company orders.
- Convert Currency	Only reply with "Y" if you are a non-US user who wants to convert US Dollar values to your currency.

7.4.3. DOS Printer

- Printer Type	S=Standard width, W= 132 column width
- Printer Name	Select from the list of printers taken from Option-E, Set Printers
- Printer Port	Select LPT1, LPT2, etc. as is appropriate
- Thermal Port	Used for Eltron barcode printers only

7.4.4. POS Info

- Scanner Preamble	Usually the "@" symbol. Enter so ComTrac strips out the preamble from your scanner when you scan directly into ComTrac.
- Import File Path	Normally should be "c:\comtrac".
- Export File Path	Normally should be "c:\comtrac"

7.4.5. Rental Information

- Rental Return Time	Enter the time after which rentals are late. Use the 24-hour clock, where 10:00am = 10:00 and 10:00pm is 22:00.
- Days Open	Enter "Y under each day your store is open, "N" if closed

7.4.6. Misc Info

- Current Cust Seq # — ComTrac increments this number every time you add a new customer. If you reset it to a higher number, be sure to use leading zeroes.
- Current Mdse Seq # — ComTrac increments this number every time you add a new product. If you need to set it to a higher number, be sure to use leading zeroes.
- Current Bak Seq # — ComTrac increments this number every time you add a new common back issue to the Back Issue Cycle file. If you need to set it to a higher number, be sure to use leading zeroes.

7.5. Set Printers

This tool allows you to select printers from a pre-defined list of printer attributes. When the screen clears, you'll see a short list of printers on the left side of the screen. If your printer isn't on this list, press the INSERT key to see a large list of printers on the right side of the screen.

Scroll down this large list to find your printer. Printers are listed by Manufacturer and Model Number. Many modern "windows" printers will not be found on this list. If your printer isn't in the large list, choose the nearest model number.

Note:
Many modern "windows" printers don't support DOS applications or do a poor job of printing from DOS applications. If so, you can send your reports to file and print them from your word processing package or from WordPad using a monotype font such as Courier 9.

7.7. Purge Files

The purge files option allows to remove groups of entries from ComTrac when they are no longer needed.

- Purge Comics Cycle Sheets

This tool prompts you for a purge date. All comics cycle sheets with a Start Date before the purge date will be marked for deletion. You can choose to have ComTrac ignore titles with issues in the range 1-4, if you want to keep data for ordering new solicitations. When the purge process is done, ComTrac will give you a chance to abort the purge process.

- Purge Comics Master File

This tool goes through your master title file. If there is no corresponding cycle sheet in the cycle sheet file, the item is marked for deletion.

- Purge Specialties

Go through the list of specialty products and checkmark the items you want to purge.

7.8. Change Title

This tool allows you to change the spelling of a title globally throughout the various ComTrac modules. Select the module (New Comics, Specialties, etc.) that you want to work with, then select the product you want to make changes in. Enter the new spelling.

7.9. DBU

DBU (database utility) is a special tool that you SHOULD NOT USE unless you are being coached by ComTrac Tech Support or you have been sent keystroke instructions on its use. It allows you to make radical changes in the contents of the ComTrac data files.

7.10. Create PLU

The "Create PLU" tool is used to do three things: create a fresh Price-Lookup-Table for your POS stations, to create or update the Department Table for your POS stations or to create a text export file which you can use to update a retail web site.

When you use this tool, you can choose to update any single module within the POS PLU table or the entire PLU table. ComTrac will prompt you whether each module is taxeable or not. If ComTrac asks you whether to update the Inventory Lookup Table, reply "Y". Exporting a text version of the PLU table is optional.

Note:
When ComTrac asks you for the directory path to export files, the default should be "C:\COMTRAC". If it isn't, go to "Set System Values" in Utilities and change the directories under "POS Info" to "C:\COMTRAC" for both the IMPORT and EXPORT fields.

7.11. Sales Update/POS

This tool takes the sales output file from any POS station and uses it to update ComTrac inventory and generate a sales report. ComTrac does not recognize any sales made through POS until the data has been exported from POS and imported into ComTrac through this tool.

All POS sales export files have unique names assigned to them by POS. The naming rules are:

Originating Store Code + Month + Day = file name
Year + Register Number = extension

Eg: PARK + 02 + 20, 01 + 1 = PARK0220.011

When you use the tool ComTrac will ask you to select the file you want to import from a drop-down window. After the update process is complete, this tool generates a profitability report and an exception report. The exception report lists any items that didn't update properly and the reason for their not being updated.

You should fix any problems flagged by the exception report and then run the update process again for the same file. ComTrac will ignore all transactions which were updated successfully and focus just on non-updated items. This means you could have a file that updated 100% successfully and import it another time without damaging your inventory.

This tool also updates a file named PROFHIST.DBF, which is used by the Profitability Report to generate profitability reports for a range of dates, departments or stores.

7.12. Handscan Update

A few ComTrac users have portable inventory scanners. This tool can import an ASCII delimited file produced by the Inventory Scanner software and use that information to update ComTrac inventory.

The import file must contain the following information in this order:
- barcode
- quantity

and have a DOS filename 1-8 characters in length with an extension.

This tool produces a variance or shrinkage report that provides you with a listing of all items where the inventoried quantity does not match the quantity stored in the computer, along with the retail and wholesale value of the merchandise variance.

7.13. DOS Shell

This tool will drop you into the DOS command line in the ComTrac folder. Most DOS commands can be executed while in DOS Shell. Type EXIT and press Enter to exit DOS Shell and return to ComTrac.

8.0. Special Topics

8.1. Adding a DOS Printer to ComTrac

Go to ComTrac, **Utilities, Option-E (Set Printer).** When the screen clears, press the INSERT key to bring up the large menu on the right of the screen. Go to Manufacturer of your new printer and select the appropriate printer. If your exact printer model doesn't appear on this list, select the nearest model number to what you are using. You will see that the printer you selected has been added to the short printer list on the left hand of the screen. Press <esc> to bring up the Exit Menu, then confirm your desire to exit.

Then go to Utilities-D | Option (Set system values) and go to the Printer section, enter the first few characters of the printer name in the Printer field, press 'enter' and select it from the drop down menu. Exit from ComTrac, re-enter and test your printer. In most cases it will work properly.

Important for Windows Users!!!
If your printer is a so-called Windows printer that relies solely on the Windows operating system for control, you will have to route all your reports to file and print them out through Notepad or Word. HP in particular has cut costs on a number of its printers by stripping out the on-board CPU and relying on Windows Print Manager to do the heavy lifting.

If none of this works, we can possibly modify ComTrac to support your printer, free of charge. We will need the printer control codes which are normally found in the Appendix of your printer manual. If your manual has this information, Xerox the pages and mail or fax them to us and we'll do the rest. You may have to call the manufacturer of your printer and have them fax the codes to you, as not every manufacturer is putting their control codes into their User Manuals.

When we make the transition to Windows (32-bit) ComTrac we will be able to print directly to any Windows-compatible printer.

8.2. Creating Department Codes for ComTrac & POS

The way ComTrac and POS deals with departments is to assign a department to each stock ca(which is what we call the Master Title entry for each item).

8.2.1. Enter Departments in Department Table

The first step is to enter your departments in the Department Table. Go to Utilities|A-Maintain Tables |Ordering Tables and make sure there's a department definition for each department you want to work with. Two department codes are mandatory, "NC" for "new comics" and "MISC" for "miscellaneous".

Other than these two reserved codes you can use anything else you want. There is no limit to the number of departments, but most retailers find that between 8-16 departments are sufficient.

Remember, you can create the equivalent of sub-departments by using the Family/Genre Table. So you can have "X-Titles" and "Spider-Titles" as "families" within the "NC" department. Or you can use the family/genre codes to create categories that cross multiple departments, such as 'MUGS'.

8.2.2. Assign Departments to Merchandise

Any item that's in the New Comics Master Title file automatically has the department code "NC". Any item that's in the Common Back Issue Master Title file automatically has the department code "BAK".

You will need to assign department codes to any item that's entered in the Specialties Master Title file or the High-Value file. The reason why we have a department code field in the High-Value file is that high-value items can include back issue comics, expensive Magic singles and collectible action figures.

8.2.3. Transfer Departments to POS

Once you have defined your Department Table (in step 1), go to **Utilities|I-Create PLU Table** to create an export file with your department codes for POS. Once this export file has been created, go into POS and import it into POS. Go to **Lists|Department Table** to see the contents of the file. The difference between the POS and ComTrac department tables are that the POS table lets you assign standard discounts to individual departments, to specify the beginning and end of sale periods, etc.

8.2.4. Consolidating Sales, &c.

When you sell products by barcode or title through POS, the department code is part of the entry in the PLU Table. If you sell something Manually, you are entering the quantity, sale price and department just as if you were using a cash register.

Either way, the daily sales file has a department code for every item that was sold in the day. As a result, ComTrac and POS can generate reports subdivided by department code.

8.3. Creating Subscriber Lists on New Comics Day

1. Go to Reserves in ComTrac. (Do this **after** you have used Quicklog/Electronic Invoice to perform your initial logging in.

2. Select **B:Perform Jobs | A:UpdateNew Arrivals**

3. Select **Yes** when prompted whether to continue updating new arrivals

4. A window will appear with a number of titles in alphabetical order

5. Go through the window (arrow up or down, page up or down) and mark all titles which have arrived in this week's shipment with a checkmark by pressing the PLUS key while the highlight bar is on them. Deselect items by pressing the PLUS key again.

6. When you have checkmarked all the new items, press the ENTER key to exit the window.

7. Select **Yes** when prompted whether to actually exit from the window

8. In a few seconds, ComTrac will have flagged every order in the Reserves Order file which matches the checkmarked titles. Select so as to return to the "Reserves" menu

10. Select **P:Previous Menu | C:Do Reports | B:Res Title Pull Report**

11. Most ComTrac users select **A:Title by Store** first. This generates a list showing how many units of each title should be set aside for subscribers *in total*. The remainder can be set aside for immediate distribution to the newsstand racks. Generally select "Arrived Titles" when running this report to save paper. Select "All Titles" if you are running a spot check on subscription orders before generating your monthly Diamond comics order.

12. You then need to generate a list of specific customers and titles. Most ComTrac users prefer to generate their list "Title by Customer". This prints a list of titles which have arrived that the customer has on order in alphabetical order. We suggest using the prompts:
"In-store customers" rather than 'mail order customers'
"NOT making invoices" for customers
"Arrived Titles" rather than for "Every title"
"Just Customers with Titles" rather than for "All Customers"

13. Once you've generated all of your pick lists you can reset ComTrac for next week's arrivals. There are two ways to do this. At the end of either of the Customer/Title pick lists you'll be prompted whether you want to reset for next week. If you respond with **Yes** you'll be prompted whether to reset Numeric Fields (usually "No"), and Reset Arrival Flags ("Yes" if you're done for this week). If ComTrac found any items at the end of their issue range it will have marked them for deletion. If ComTrac finds any items, it=ll stop and tell you how many items it found. If the number seems too large, you can stop the process and research items in the Reserves Order File that are marked for deletion. To reset subscriber data for next week, go to **Reserves|B- Perform Jobs|B-Reset End of Week.**

8.4. Cycling New Comics Sales - Manually and POS

Even though many comics publishers have barcoded their Direct Market comics, many comics retailers are going to have to continue manually cycling comics sales. We've tried to make this process more convenient by designing a function to help you enter sales into your Cycle File entries.

When you select the **New Comics|C-Update Comics Sales** option, you will be prompted to choose whether you are using MANUAL or POS.

8.4.1. Manual Updating

If you are using the *Manual Updating* option, you'll be prompted to enter the CYCLE DATE. The next cycle date, as defined by your entries in "Set System Values" will appear at the prompt as a default value. If that date is the date you cycled comics inventory, press the <Enter> key and continue. Otherwise, enter the proper date on which you cycled your comics. ComTrac will validate the data against the LogIn date you specified in "Set System Values".

Select the store you are entering comics inventory data for and select the "Manual" option when you choose between "Manual" and "POS". The work area on the screen will clear, and a new menu will appear, and the screen will fill with title and issue data for the store you chose. The titles on the screen will follow the same order as the cycle sheet form that you are working with.

You will be prompted to choose whether to initialize your cycling quantities to Zero or to the quantity for the Last Cycle Count. In general, we advise selecting LAST CYCLE COUNT. There will be a pause while *ComTrac* prepares a working file.

The Comics Cycle Update menu has five options. They are:
Remove - If you want to pull a book before its scheduled Pull Date, use this option. It will prompt you for the ending quantity (zero or otherwise), pull the book and adjust the Pull Date and Cycle Weeks values so you don't get 100% sell-through figures accidentally.

Cycle - Select the option and enter the quantity on the Count Form for that title and issue. Then press the <Enter> key. *ComTrac* will update the Cycle Sheet entry for that issue and title. If the title is past its scheduled pull date, *ComTrac* will ask you if the title is being pulled from the Newsstand. If you reply with <Y>es, the entry will be marked as having been pulled. If you reply with <N>o, the title will continue to be treated as active and will continue to appear on your cycle sheet worksheets that you generate for your stores. *ComTrac* will continue to nag you whether the title has been pulled whenever you cycle it.

Find - You'll be prompted to enter the Title name and issue. You may choose to enter just part of the title and leave the issue prompt space empty. *ComTrac* will jump to the nearest match to your entry and open a select window showing the nearest matches to the prompt. This is a quick way of moving through the Comics Cycle file in big jumps.

Next - This command will move the highlight bar to the next comics entry on the screen.
Previous - This command will move the highlight bar to the previous entry on the screen.

Return - When you are finished choose this option. If you need to exit and you haven't finished your work, be sure to enter the proper cycle date when you use the function again, and start where you left off. Titles marked as pulled will not be accessible to you so you can't double-enter data for it. If you re-enter data for a title which hasn't been pulled - the last value you entered against the new value is checked. If they're identical, no change will be made. If they are different, only

the difference will be entered. If you are in doubt, exit this function and look at the Cycle List entry itself.

8.4.2. POS Cycle Sheeting

If you are using *ComTrac-POS, ComTrac* will update your cycle sheets every time you import sales history from your POS units. We recommend that you physically count your comics and periodicals every week as you Pull older items from your newsstand. If you don't count them when they're pulled yoannot find out what your merchandise shrink rate is.

ComTrac will ask you for the Cycle Date, just as in Manual mode. Select the proper location for your Count from the select window, select POS mode and after some preparations you'll see a cycling screen that's identical to the Manual process. The only titles that should appear are books which are at or past their scheduled pull date.

When you Quit the POS cycling process, you'll be prompted to QUIT cycling or ENTER data for another store. If you QUIT cycling, you'll have the opportunity to generate a Variance Report for any of your stores. The Variance Report can be sent to Screen, File or Printer; and shows the total variance between what you actually reported and what *ComTrac* thought was present in inventory. Variances are totalled in units and retail dollars.

8.5. Daily ComTrac Tasks

There aren't many tasks which need to be performed each and every day.

8.5.1. Back Up Your Data

You should Back Up your data on any day when you have made changes to your ComTrac files (not part of ComTrac)

8.5.2. Generate PLU Table

Generate a new PLU Table (POS Users only) for POS registers, if new merchandise is in ComTrac. (Utilities, Option-I)

8.5.3. Import POS Sales History

Load POS sales history into ComTrac and update inventory. (Utilities, Option-J)

8.6. Editing Config.Sys to Add the Dos Memory Manager

Click on **Start|Programs|Accessories|Notepad** to open the Windows Notepad editor. Enter Config.Sys in the dialogue box after you've navigated to your C: drive.

You will either see an editing window with nothing in it, or you may only see two lines with the words "buffers" and "files" in them. Here's what your config.sys file should contain:

```
device=C:\WINDOWS\himem.sys   /testmem:off
device=c:\windows\emm386.exe   noems
files=65
dos=high,umb
```

These commands should be at the front of your Config.Sys file. Any other commands that are already present should follow them When you have added these commands, click on **Files|Exit.** Be sure to say "Yes" if prompted to save your changes! Then go ahead and reboot your PC by clicking on the commands: Start|ShutDown|Reboot

Note:
If you use Windows 98 and you have a line "buffers=nn" where "nn" is some number, remove it from your config.sys file as this version of Windows doesn't like this command.

8.7. End-of-Day Closing Routine for POS

Closing down a satellite POS installation at end-of-day is pretty straightforward if this checklist is followed consistently:

8.7.1. Generate Reports

1. Journal Tape

You can generate the journal tape by selecting this report. The disadvantage of generating the journal tape here is that it will use up quite a lot of register tape. The receipt printers that we recommend can work with 2-layer receipt paper, which automatically creates a journal tape for you. The drawback to this approach is that you need to create a place for the second layer to go to during the day, and it has to be bundled up at the end of the day.

Our recommendation is that you print your journal tape from ComTrac (rather than POS) during the process of updating your inventory. If you are very careful about backing up and storing your data transfer files, it's unnecessary to generate paper copies of your register tapes. You can generate them in case of an audit from your sales transfer Zip files. If you choose to do this, *we strongly recommend that you save your Zip files in a fireproof box that is kept off-site. Accumulate your files on diskette monthly, and at the start of the new month get them off-site into a bank safety deposit box or the equivalent!*

2. Dept Sales

Department Sales should be generated on a daily, weekly and monthly basis. Depending on your accounting program and practices, you can update your general ledger for departmental sales on either a daily or weekly basis. If you are a smaller business, weekly updates can work well. If you are a larger business, daily updates are more appropriate for cash management purposes. Generating Department Sales for a month or even a quarter is best used in preparing sales analyses.

3. Sales Tax by Dept

The comments for "Dept Sales" apply equally to Sales Tax by Department.

4. Subscriber Bonus Points

You should generate this report on a daily, weekly or monthly basis. If you are a small store, generating the report on a weekly basis is best. If you are a larger operation, generating the report on a daily basis is preferable. This report tells you how many unredeemed bonus points are held by your customers.

We recommend that you keep a record in a spreadsheet or data management program with the following information:

Store code (if you have multiple stores)
Date (use the first day of the week if you are storing data on a weekly basis)
Unredeemed Bonus Points (from this report)
Qty of Bonus Points Redeemed in period

5. Time Clock

Your Time Clock report can be generated on a daily basis, but most retailers will want to generate it at the end of their week for payroll purposes.

8.7.2. Balance Drawer

If you want, you can balance each cashier's till individually or you can balance the till just for the entire day. See your POS User Manual for details on Balancing Drawers.

8.7.3. Export Sales History File

Click on Files | Export Files, select the the day's entry and export to diskette or directory, depending on whether you are using one or more PCs. See your POS User Manual for details.

8.7.4. Log Out

We recommend that you always log out of POS and ***turn off*** your PC overnight, unless you are planning to work on your PC from a remote location using PC-AnyWhere or an equivalent program.

8.8. Evaluating Store Performance Ratios

Many of our software users have asked us what store performance indicators we recommend that they generate using ComTrac information. Here are some useful indicators:

8.8.1. Number of Subscribers

Keep track of the number of subscribers that you have 'on the books' every month, along with their average order size in both pieces of merchandise and gross (un-discounted) sales value. You should also calculate the average value of a piece of merchandise which they order. This information shows how stable your comics sales are, how much discount you are giving up to attract this business, etc.

8.8.2. Customer Transactions per Week

Keep track of the number of customer transactions each store experiences every week. Changes in this figure indicate fundamental changes in a store's financial base. The average comics shop depends on fewer than 300 core customers for its existence.

8.8.3. Average Customer Transaction: Store-Wide

Divide the total sales for the week by the number of customer transactions to obtain the average customer transaction. The average customer transaction shows how effectively store staff is selling to customers and how well your merchandise mix matches your customer's needs. Typical averages range between $14.00-$24.00 per customer transaction.

8.8.4. Average Customer Transaction: By Department

Divide the total sales for the week for each POS or cash register department by the number of customer transactions in that department to calculate the average transaction by department.

8.8.5. Sales per Square Foot: Store-Wide

Divide the total sales for the week by the total sales area for the store (exclude back-room areas or washrooms) to calculate sales per square foot. Sales per square foot is a performance indicator that shows how appropriately sales area is allocated to each major department line. Sales per square foot performance is also an indicator of how well the store's gross size matches up with current sales. Low sales per s.f. levels show that the store either is too large for its sales potential, or that it doesn't carry a sufficient breadth of merchandise to generate adequate sales from its customer base.

Sales per square foot ratios vary with the gross size of the store. As a rule, the smaller the store's 'footprint' the higher the sales per square foot, with ratios in the $250-$500 per s.f. range. Very large stores (3,000 s.f.+) generally have ratios in the $100-$200 per s.f. range.

8.8.6. Sales per Square Foot: By Department

Divide the total sales for the week for each POS or cash register department by the sales area dedicated to that department to calculate the sales per square foot by department. Ratios can range from $2000 per s.f. for collectible cards to $50 per s.f. for common back issues.

8.8.7. Sales per Employee-Hour-Worked

Divide the total sales for the week by the total number of employee hours scheduled for the store. Add in the store's share of any corporate staff. The result is an indicator that shows how efficiently you are allocating and managing staff time, and how productive your staff is. Ratios of $20 or less show an inefficient use of staff time, $20-$45 are average to average-plus values, anything over $45 is good.

8.8.8. Cost of Goods Sold

Calculate the percent cost of goods sold on an 'average quarter' basis. Cost of goods indicates how efficiently you are purchasing and selling goods. Cost of goods for a blended comic and game store should be below 60% and the operator should aim for 55%. Most comics shops have COGS of 65% or even higher!

8.8.9. Inventory Turnover Rate

Calculate the average inventory turnover rate on an 'average quarter' basis. The turnover rate is an indicator that shows how quickly merchandise is selling. Take the beginning inventory for a period, add in the ending inventory for the period, divide the quantity by two. This is your average inventory. Then divide your period sales by the average inventory.

If your period is a month, multiply by 12 to get an annual inventory turn rate. If your period is a quarter, multiply by 4 to get an annual inventory turn rate. Turn rates of 1-2 are quite low, 3-4 are mediocre and 5 or 6 are good. Anything above 6 is truly excellent.

Note:
This information can be kept in a spreadsheet or database management program. You should maintain this information on a weekly basis by individual store location. You can combine store information as needed when you want to produce company-wide statistics. Programs such as *Access* or *Excel* will also let you generate charts and graphs based on this data.

8.9. Extract.Exe: Free-form Data Analysis for POS Users

Sales data in ComTrac/DOS is generally stored in summary format, such as “Sales Year-to-Date”. While this is convenient for reporting, there are many times where you would like to be able look at sales data in much greater detail. The way we have solved this problem in ComTrac/DOS is to create a utility program named Extract.Exe, which should be in your POS20 directory. If it is missing, you can get a replacement copy from us.

Make sure that POS is shut down. Then either use Windows Explorer to find and run Extract.Exe or go into DOS and change directories from “Windows” to “POS20" by typing **cd \pos20** <enter>. Once in POS20, type **Extract** <Emter> to run the program from DOS.

Once the program has begun running it will show you a status message. The more sales data you have in your POS program, the longer it will take to process. When the program is done, you will either return to the POS20 DOS prompt or the Windows desktop, depending on which method you used.

The result of running Extract.Exe is a dbf file named Extract.Dbf or Uextract.Dbf, depending on the version of Extract that you have. This file is completely independent of ComTrac or POS, and can be copied to any PC or directory you wish. You can import this file into any third-party program such as Access or Excel by specifying the dBase3 file format when you import the file.

Extract combines data from three POS files (History, Transactions and Payments) into a single “flat” file for maximum convenience when you perform your analyses. You can analyze your sales data by such criteria as day of week, employee, department, individual product or range of dates.

If you have more than one register, run Extract.Exe once on each PC. Then change the name of the second Extract.Dbf file (such as Reg2.Dbf), and import both files into Excel or whatever other software package you prefer.

8.10. Fixing ComTrac & POS "Internal Errors"

Once in a while POS or ComTrac users may experience difficulty in getting into these programs.. The DOS error messages are not particularly helpful, as the DOS error handler often misinterprets the nature of the problem. This also applies if you are using a Windows short-cut icon from your desktop to load either ComTrac or POS and the screen flickers when you select the icon, and then returns you to the desktop.

We find that the following actions will fix the problem in 99% of all instances of users experiencing these problems:

1. With POS closed down, go to the POS20 DOS prompt. If you are in a Windows environment: Go to **Start | Programs | MS-DOS.** You'll see the prompt **C:\windows** on the screen. Enter **cd \pos20** and press **<enter>** to switch directories to POS. When the prompt changes to **C:\pos20** enter the command **del *.cdx** and this will delete all the POS index files. Then type "pos" to load the point of sale program. POS will detect that the files are missing and will recreate them. Most of the time this is all that you will need to do.

The equivalent process for ComTrac problems is to enter DOS, change directories to the ComTrac directory and enter the command **del *.ntx <enter>**. Then run ComTrac. It will detect that the index files are missing and will rebuild them from scratch, eliminating any damages.

If this doesn't solve your problem delete the index files again and go on to the next items.

2. Run SCANDISK. This will check for problems with your File Allocation Table and repair them if any problems are found. In most cases this will come up clean. This applies to both ComTrac and POS problems.

3. POS users should Run CLNTRANS. This is a utility program that should be in your POS20 directory (the full name is CLNTRANS.EXE) that can deal with mis-matched links between your three POS transaction files. Make sure POS is closed down and go to POS20, then enter the command **clntrans** and press 'Enter'. Follow the prompts.

4. Finally, if you are getting a 'write' error, check the amount of free hard disk space on your POS PC. Hard disks and controller cards are pretty reliable these days (modern hard disks have a normal useful life of 4-5 years!) so this usually means you are low on free hard disk space. If you have less than 2Mb of free hard disk space start pruning your old, excess files. This really only is a possibility for those of you using older PCs with small hard drives.

5. If your system is resetting itself to Demo mode, you may need to remove your copy protection files and re-enter a new unlock code for POS. See the cheat sheet on Removing Copy Protection from ComTrac or POS.

8.11. Generate a Cycle Sheet Count Form

You can generate a cycle sheet count form for every store or location using **New Comics|D-Make Count Form**. The output will contain every new comics title/issue which is still marked as being "Active". The output will be in alphabetical order by issue number. Every title which is at or has passed its scheduled pull date will be marked with a "P" on the form. If you select the Manual option, every active title/issue combination will appear on the counjt form. If you select the POS option, only active title/issue combinations that are at or past their scheduled pull date will apear on the count form.

NOTE: When your staff pulls titles, they should CIRCLE the issue number of any title which is marked as being due to pull *that they are leaving on the shelf!* There are often good reasons why store staff may leave a title on the newstand past its pull date - so for the convenience of your data entry person, *only the exceptions* should be marked. Any title which is due to be pulled and not circled should be entered as having been pulled.

When you generate this form, you will be prompted for the cycle date. After that, you'll select the store or location for which the form is being created from a select window which will display all the location choices. After a pause while the computer does some pre-processing, you'll have the choice of sending the form to your printer or to a holding file on your hard disk. If you choose to send the results to a holding file, you'll be prompted to enter the name of the file. When you're ready to use the file, it will be found under the name you chose, with a "PRN" extension in the ComTrac directory or folder..

8.12. Generating Barcodes in ComTrac

ComTrac users have four choices when generating bar code labels. You can generate bar code labels on any Epson-Compatible dot-matrix printer or Hewlett Packard laser printer or inkjet printer with Printer Control Levels “4" or “5". ComTrac also supports two commercial bar code label printers. You cannot generate bar code labels from your receipt printer!

8.12.1. Epson-Compatible Dot Matrix Printers

Most ComTrac users create their own bar code labels from an Epson-compatible dot-matrix printer on one-up mailing labels (5,000 to a box). These labels are 3 1/2" wide and 15/16" high. We have found that these labels are the least expensive to generate in terms of consumables (3¢ per label plus printer ribbons) and last a long time.

ComTrac puts the bar code on the label along with an alpha-numeric representation of the label code. The description, price and grade (if used) are also printed on the label. An additional advantage of this method is that very few labels are wasted. Make sure that your dot-matrix printer is Epson-compatible and that it has a functioning tractor feed.

8.12.2. Hewlett Packard Laser or Inkjet Printers

A number of ComTrac users generate bar code labels on HP-compatible laser printers or inkjet printers using Avery 5160 mailing labels. (30 to a page) These labels are smaller than the mailing-label barcodes generated on Epson-compatible and look more professional. They are more expensive to generate (8¢ per label plus the cost of toner, not including wasted labels)

ComTrac puts the bar code on the label along with an alpha-numeric representation of the label code. The description, price and grade (if used) are also printed on the label. The rate of label wastage varies. Short print runs waste the most labels.

Your printer **must** be HP-compatible and have Printer Control Language versions 4 or greater. So-called ‘HP Windows’ printers won’t work properly with ComTrac unless you download a special driver from Hewlett Packard’s web site. As far as we know the only HP inkjets that will print proper barcodes are the 1200 series or higher.

8.12.3. Seiko Ez-30 Label Printer

We support and sell the Seiko Ez-30 Label Printer. This label/bar code printer comes with its own software for generating labels or barcodes in both DOS and Windows95/98 versions. It can take a transfer file that ComTrac generates, import it and create bar code labels.

We don’t really recommend this printer to ComTrac users, as it's slow and limited in the size of the bar code it can print. It is limited to 12-digit barcodes, which will deal with most ComTrac bar code numbers but is still very limited.

8.12.4. Eltron Label Printer

The Eltron label/bar code printer also comes with its own software for generating labels or barcodes in both DOS and Windows95/98 versions. It uses a transfer file from ComTrac, imports it and creates bar code labels. We have users who have generated large bar code label runs week in and week out for four years on these machines and they are still going strong. They appear to be real workhorses, and we strongly recommend them for higher-volume single stores and for multi-store operations with centralized ordering & handling of ‘specialty’ products.

This printer is faster than the Seiko Ez-30, offers a larger range of label/bar code sizes and is better suited for creating larger numbers of barcodes. Check with us for the proper model

number. ***Price: $525.00, including shipping & handling, a one year warranty including parts and labor.***

8.12.5. Our Recommendations

If you are a single-store company or are on a tight budget, we recommend going through your storeroom and using an old Epson-compatible 24-pin dot-matrix printer with tractor feed. If you don't have a suitable printer, you can often find one used for $25.00 to $60.00 locally. Get your address labels (5,000 to a roll) from your local discount office supply store and make sure you have a good supply of printer ribbons. There are several national office supply companies which still stock most common printer ribbons. Look for them on the Internet.

If you are a multi-store company or are a high-volume single store, we recommend purchasing the Eltron barcode printer. This will give you a rugged, fast machine which can generate a wide range of barcode sizes, ranging from small labels with just the barcode and an alpha-numeric representation of the barcode to larger labels with barcode and text descriptions.

8.12.6. Pre-Printed Barcode Labels

We have a source for pre-printed barcode labels. These labels have consecutive numbers, are small (about 1" by 1/2") and are of high quality. The cost is about 4¢ per label. These labels are good for situations where you have unique products (such as back issue comics or rental video cartridges).

8.13. Generating Genre or Family Codes

Genre Codes or Family Codes let you look at your sales data across departmental boundaries. Most of the time we are interested in sales by individual item or by department. But if you want to look at how a group of related products are behaving Genre Codes are the appropriate tool for you to use.

Let's say that you have a store with a significant number of customers who are interested in Alternative/Independent titles. You might want to create a Genre/Family Code for "Hate" if you were creating a temporary display or boutique featuring a wide range of products connected with this title.

You can also use Genre/Family codes to track sales of related titles for a given publisher. For example, you might create codes for your DC titles to cover Batman titles, Superman titles and "Other" titles.

We recommend that new users only have a " blank" generic genre code in their Genre Table. As you become familiar with ComTrac you can begin adding genre codes as you see fit. Keep it simple and don't get too complex right away. Experiment with just one or two genre codes other than the generic "no code" code.

8.13.1. Creating Your Own Genre Codes

Go to **Utilities | A-Maintain Tables | A-Folder Tables | C-Genre Codes**. Press "A" to "Add" a new genre code. To create a generic "no code" code, leave the code field empty and enter the name "None" or "Blank" under the description heading, then save the entry.

To create any non-blank code, enter the memnonic code you want (eg: BAT) under the code heading and then enter a brief description under the description heading. The brief description is what will appear in drop-down menus when you're chosing genre/family codes elsewhere in ComTrac.

8.13.2. Assigning Genre Codes to Groups of Products

You can always enter a Genre or Family code manually whenever you are creating an inventory entry manually. Most of the time you will want to be able to select a Genre code and assign it to a group of items electronically - it's a much faster process!

Go to **Orders | J-Assign Codes** and select Genre Codes. Select the Genre code you want to use from the drop-down menu. (If it isn't in the Genre Table it won't show up in the drop-down table!) Then choose which group of products you want to work with: Comics, Specialties, etc. In a moment you'll see a window that contains all the items in the group you chose, in alphabetical order by title.

Go through the list and checkmark all the items that you want to assign to this Genre Code. Pressing the spacebar or plus key will put a checkmark to the left of the selected item. If you want to get rid of a checkmark, put the highlight bar on the item and press spacebar or plus key.

When you exit the selection window ComTrac will put your chosen Genre code into all the items which you checkmarked. Repeat as needed.

8.14. Getting ComTrac Started

If you are a new ComTrac user, getting ComTrac and Point-of-Sale (POS) up and running may seem to be an intimidating process. If we break the process down into manageable pieces it will go a lot faster and easier.

8.14.1. The Basics for ComTrac and POS

Here are the basics for installing, configuring and initializing ComTrac and POS on your PC.

8.14.1.1 Install ComTrac

Install ComTrac on your PC and call our office for your unlock codes. Don't install POS yet. You have work to do in ComTrac before you install POS.

8.14.1.2 The Store Table

Go to **Utilities|A-Maintain Tables|A-Folder Tables|A-Store Table** and create an entry for your store in the Store Table. Press "A" for "Add" and enter an alpha-numeric store code (***do not start the code with a number!)*** and a short name that describes the store or location. If you want to track merchandise in your back room or "warehouse" this is a good time to enter a second code such as "WARE" or "BACK".

8.14.1.3 The Department Table

Then go to **Utilities|A-Maintain Tables|B-Ordering Tables|C-Dept Code File** and create all the basic department codes that you want to begin with. You must enter two mandatory department codes: **NC** for **New Comics** and **MISC** for **Miscellaneous/Non-Comics** products.

We suggest that you not get too detailed in your department code breakdowns until you have some experience as to what information you want to extract from ComTrac and POS. It's easier to break down a larger department (such as **GAMES**) into multiple sub-departments than to combine them after the fact.

8.14.1.4 Install POS

Now that you have a Store Table and Department Code Table, go ahead and install POS onto your PC. You'll have to call us for an unlock code when you do so. Be sure to read the chapter in the POS User Manual on "Getting Started".

8.14.1.5 Create/Export ComTrac Data ???

Once you've got POS installed and configured as per the instructions in the POS User Manual, go back to ComTrac. Go to **Utilities|I-Create PLU** and create both the initial PLU Table (which will be empty) and the Department Table. The next time you load POS it will automatically seek out and update itself for these files, so long as you checked the "automatic update" box in the Options area of POS when you installed and configured it.

Note: *At this point you are ready to start using POS as a stand-alone cash register.*

8.16.2. Subscribers and Customers

Most ComTrac users find that entering their Subscribers and Subscriber orders into ComTrac is the next most appropriate step. Go to the chapter in this User Manual on "Subscribers: Get Them Up and Running".

Once this task is completed, you can start looking up subscribers (and customers) at POS when you begin a transaction. The benefit of doing this is that every item that these customers buy will be stamped with their customer code, date and time for future marketing analyses and projects.

8.16.3. Getting your New Comics Up

If you are a ComTrac-Lite user who is upgrading to Plus/POS, all your comics are already in ComTrac and are ready to scan. All you have to do is create a PLU Table in the Utilities Module and POS will pick it up.

If you are starting from scratch, you will need to create cycle sheets (comics inventory entries) for all your current comics inventory and then update them to reflect your starting inventory.

Here's a strategy which has worked very well for many of our users.

8.16.3.1 Import the Diamond Order Forms

You should have at least the six most recent Diamond order forms in electronic format on the CD-ROM which we sent you when you purchased ComTrac. Look in the **Diamdata** folder for files in the format **D060.DBF**. **D060** refers to the month and year of the form, **DBF** is the file format. Copy these files to your ComTrac folder.

Then refer to the Chapter in this Manual "Importing the Diamond Monthly Order Form".

Once you've imported the order forms, go to the Chapter in this Manual "Ordering Merchandise with ComTrac/DOS" to learn how to open a Diamond order form to write a Diamond order. Take your printed copy of your last three Diamond orders. Go through the order form and enter the quantities that you actually ordered. When you are done, exit the ordering process and Post your order. You do not need to export the order to Diamond format or print it out again.

Repeat this process for the three most recent Diamond orders. When you are done you'll have inventory records for every item you've ordered from Diamond in the last quarter.

8.16.3.2 Log in Merchandise

Now take your last twelve weekly invoices from Diamond and log in this merchandise, one week at a time. We recommend using **Orders|B-LogIn|Store|Manual** for the Log In process. The advantage of this procedure is that you can create inventory records "on the fly" if an item was ordered more than three months ago.

Review the Chapter "Logging in New Comics and General Mdse from Diamond" before you start this process.

When you are done you'll have initial inventory quantities for every item that you received from Diamond in the last three months.

8.16.3.3 Doing an Initial Comics Inventory

You should start by initializing your current comics inventory. The short version is that you need to create a Comics Count Form for "Manual Operation" (*not POS operation)*. This will list every comic that is in your inventory that you logged in. It'll be a much larger printout than what you'll normally deal with, but this will be the only time you'll have a printout this large.

Count the books as listed on the Count Form, being sure to indicate if any titles are missing from the list. When you are done, go to **New Comics|C-Update Comics Sales** and enter the quantities you recorded into the spreadsheet on the screen.

When you are done with this, exit ComTrac. Use the **Start|Run** command on the Desktop to run the program C:\ComTrac\FixCycle.Exe. This will fill in any weekly zero values in your cycle

sheets.

If you want, you can now go to **Utilities|I-Create PLU** and generate a new PLU Table. When you import this into POS (or when POS auto-imports it) you'll be able to scan all barcoded comics and sell the non-barcoded comics by their title.

8.16.4. Getting Your Specialties Up

8.16.4.1 Doing an Initial Specialties Inventory

We recommend printing out an Inventory count form for each Specialties department, one at a time. Go to **Specialties|H-Make Specialties Inv Form** to do this. When you've counted the items on the form, go to **Specialties|C-Enter Spc Sales** to update your inventory quantities.

Note that you can enter the quantity ***sold*** or the quantity ***remaining***. Be sure to set the F6 toggle so that the proper label is showing! Enter the quantities that you recorded, update your PLU Table and you can start scanning these items.

8.16.4.2 Adding Additional Specialties or Comics Inventory

If you have a significant number of comics or specialty inventory items that were not ordered in the last three months, make up a list of the items (or take one of each item to your POS station during a quiet period) and log them into ComTrac using the Manual log in process. You can scan in their barcodes directly during the process. Since you'll be creating inventory records during this process, you can enter the existing inventory directly.

8.16.4.3 Entering Common Back Issue Comics

We do not recommend creating individual inventory records for back issue comics which have retail values of less than $5.00 if you are a small store, or less than $10.00 if you are a large store. The amount of labor needed to process these items just doesn't return enough profit to justify the amount of work (both initially and later) needed to control them.

What we recommend for lower-cost common back issues is to create a series of generic inventory entries in **Specialties** (not Back Issues) based on retail price point. So you might have a $1.00, $2.00, $3.00, $4.00 and $5.00 inventory entry, with anywhere from several hundred to several thousand units in each inventory items starting inventory amount.

Then, as you add to inventory you can simply add items to the existing quantities, and as you sell back issues from each category POS will deduct them from inventory. What you'll know at any time is how much stock you have, what the weighted average cost was, and whether it's selling at least as fast as it's coming into your store.

8.16.4.4 Entering High-Value Back Issue Comics

All high-priced back issues should be entered into the High-Value file in the Back Issue module. Doing this creates a unique inventory record for each item, and allows you to search your inventory for customers by creator, artist, etc. and to record special comments about each item. You can also generate individual barcode labels for your high-value back issue comics.

8.17. Importing the Diamond Monthly Order Form

8.17.1. Diamond Order Form Nomenclature

You must import the monthly Diamond order form into ComTrac before you can write your

monthly Diamond order.

You can download the current order form from Diamond's BBS or Web Site in compressed (Zip) format. The Diamond order form uses the naming syntax MM-Y with an "Exe" extension. January 1998 would be named **018.exe** and December 1998 would be **128.exe**. The Diamond naming convention for the actual monthly order form file is "D" plus the MM-Y with a "Dbf" extension. January 1998 would be named **D018.dbf** and December 1998 would be **D128.dbf**.

8.17.2. Downloading from Diamond BBS/Web Site

Most ComTrac users download the Exe file into a separate Diamond folder or directory. Once the Exe file has been downloaded, either enter the command **018.exe [Enter]** at the Diamond DOS prompt or double-click on the **018.exe** icon through Windows Explorer. The monthly Exe file will self-decompress, creating a number of files within the directory.

8.17.3. Importing from Diskette

If you receive your monthly Diamond order form on diskette, you can either copy the contents of the diskette to your Diamond directory or you can go to your diskette drive and enter the command **Install [Enter]**. Unless Diamond has changed their diskette again, entering the "Install" command should create a Diamond directory on your hard disk (if you didn't have one) and will decompress the "Exe" file's data into it.

8.17.4. Importing the Order Form into ComTrac

Once you have decompressed your monthly Exe file, go ahead and copy the D*.dbf file to your ComTrac folder or directory, or leave it in the Diamond directory.

Then load ComTrac and go to the Orders Menu.
Select Option-G, "Load/Zap Order Form"
Select the "Load" option from the "Load/Zap" prompt
Select the "Diamond" option from the menu
Select "ComTrac Directory" from the menu rather than "Diskette"
Depending on the default directory in your **Utilities|Set System Values|POS Data**, ComTrac will show you the path it will use to look for the Diamond order file.

If you the D???.DBF file is in your Diamond directory enter the path **C:\Diamond\D???.DBF** and all the qualifying files will appear in a Pick Box. Select the proper file and press "Enter". If the D???.DBF file is in your ComTrac directory, use the path **C:\Comtrac\D???.DBF** and press "Enter". All the qualifying files will appear in a Pick Box. Select the proper file and press "Enter".

A prompt box will appear with the month and year in it as the default order form description. Almost all ComTrac users accept the default. Note that ComTrac won't let you import an order form using a description that's already insider ComTrac! If you are importing the June 1998 order form, "June 1998" would be an appropriate description.

You will see a message that ComTrac is "Importing Basic Distributor Order File". You also see a gas gauge status bar telling you that addition processing is going on. Finally, you see a large pick box filled with items from the Diamond order form. Some of these items will save checkmarks to the left of the descriptions. These items are considered to be Comics, all other items are considered to be perpetual order items.

Most ComTrac users don't want to wade through 2,000-3,000 items hand-editing the checkmarks. We recommend that you press the [Enter] key and let ComTrac do the heavy lifting. When

you actually write your order, you can manually switch individual items from Comic to Specialty status as needed. That's a more efficient use of your time than trying to deal with all items, whether you order them or not!

When you press [Enter] to leave the box, ComTrac will go through two passes of the order form, one for Comics and one for Specialties. ComTrac displays status bars during both processes so you know that everything is going well.

When this is done, you'll be asked whether you want to "Delete the Original Import File?". Answer with 'Y', since a copy is still in your Diamond directory. You have imported your current Diamond order pack and are now back in the Main Menu.

Other Jobs:

1. Go to Reserves|B-Perform Jobs|J-Xfer
   Comics->Reserves to update your Subscriber Title file
2. Go to Orders|A-Order Mdse|A-Order New Comics to begin the ordering process for your stores

8.18. Importing the the Diamond Weekly Invoice

Even if you don't use POS, you can use QuickLog and Diamond's "Invoice on Disk" to update your Reserves and Special Orders. This is most useful for retailers who take a large number of Special Orders from their customers.

8.18.1. Getting Your Invoice File

Diamond will make your weekly invoice available to you on their website or bulletin board on request. They provide three file formats: "dbf", "dat" and "txt". The format you want to use with ComTrac is the one which has just data in it, with commas separating fields and quotes around character fields. The contents will look like this:

```
"SPARTA"
"99999"
"Invoice on Disk"
"02/13/99"
5,"NOV980835D ","A NEXT #6 (002)",1.99,1.0397,5.20,1,5
14,"DEC980824D ","A NEXT #7 (002)",1.99,.9950,13.93,1,1
5,"DEC980824D ","A NEXT #7 (002)",1.99,1.0397,5.20,1,5
```

The file name will be either "99999.txt" or "99999.dat", depending. Download both file types and use your text editor (such as Notepad or Wordpad) to check the contents.

8.18.2. Using QuickLog

1. Go to the Orders Menu, select "B-Login/Logout Merchandise"
2. Login by "Store"
3. Select "Invoice on Disk"
4. Select "Yes - Go to QuickLog"
5. Read the two pages of notes if you need to
6. Select the store for your invoice
7. Respond to the prompt "Are you loading an invoice on disk" with "Yes"
8. Enter the proper Login Date for your shipment - ComTrac won't let you put in an incorrect date in terms of the proper day of the week
8. ComTrac will prompt whether to continue the logging in process, respond with "Yes"
9. You should see the prompt "C:\COMTRAC*." in a dialogue box that asks you where to look for the invoice file. If you don't see a prompt, you can go later to Utilities | Set System Values | POS and enter the values "C:\COMTRAC" in both the Import Path and Export Path fields. The next time you use ComTrac the default prompt will appear.
10. Go to the end of the prompt and add "txt" after the dot. Press enter to get the selection window. All the TXT files in the ComTrac directory will appear. Move the highlight bar to the proper file and press Enter to select it.
11. After a moment, ComTrac will tell you that it imported 'xx' items and will display them in the QuickLog spreadsheet.
12. If you see multiple instances of a comics title, be sure to look at the bottom of the screen for its issue number and Diamond part number.
13. If you are just using QuickLog to update your Reserves and Special Order files, don't make any changes to the data - just press "Quit" to exit the spreadsheet and continue.
14. Respond to the "Quit Logging in Merchandise" prompt with "Yes"
15. Respond to the "Update Inventory" prompt with "Yes"
16. Respond to the "Pre-Sell Reserves" prompt with "No"
17. Respond to the "Update New Arrivals for Reserves" prompt with "Yes"
18. You'll see a report showing all the items which were logged in, with today's date
19. Respond to all the following prompts with "No" - this will put you back into the Order Menu.

8.18.3. Checking QuickLog for Reserves

1. If you haven't printed out your invoice using Diamond's report format file, do so. You can use Utilities | M-DOS Shell to temporarily leave ComTrac without shutting it down to print this file. Typing "Edit 99999.DAT" at the ComTrac DOS prompt will open the report version where '99999' is your account number. Be sure to type "Exit" at the DOS prompt when you are done and want to return to ComTrac!

2. Go to the Reserves menu, select **B-Perform Jobs | A-Update for New Arrivals**

3. You'll see that many comics titles are already check-marked. Just cruise through the window and double check that all the comics titles were correctly marked by ComTrac. Since we are updating on Title there's always a chance that some titles won't get caught due to changes in spelling between when Diamond first solicited the book and when it shipped - or you may have changed its spelling for your convenience. The 32-bit version of ComTrac will be able to always match on part number, so this inconvenience will disappear.

4. Exit from the window when you're done and let ComTrac update for any items you check-marked yourself.

8.18.4. Generating Pull Reports

1. ComTrac is now ready to generate your pull reports, including any special orders which arrived which customers had ordered.

2. Go to **Reserves | C-Reports |B-Pull/Pick Lists.**

3. Generate Pick List "A" to get a listing of how many copies go onto the subscriber pile and how many go onto the rack or newsstand pile.

4. Then generate either Pick List "B" or "C" to get a list of which customers get which products. If you don't see Special Orders on one pick list, generate the other and they should be there.

8.18.5. Wait Till Your Shipment Comes!

Don't reset your subscriber system until your Diamond shipment actually arrives. There are often variances between your Diamond invoice and what actually ships - so wait till the shipment arrives and then correct for variances.

8.18.6. It's on the Invoice but didn't Ship!

If an item was on the invoice but didn't ship, go to Reserves | Perform Jobs and go to the Recall Tool so any orders which were marked for deletion will be undeleted. Do the same thing in the Special Orders menu for items which have been marked for purging that didn't arrive.

8.18.7. It wasn't on the Invoice but came in anyway!

Go to Update New Arrivals and check-mark it has having arrived. That'll take care of comics items. For Special Orders, to to the Special Orders menu and manually flag it has having come in.

8.19. Installing ComTrac and POS Software Upgrades

We provide regular software upgrades to ComTrac and to the POS "frontend" program. If you

are in support we will notify you by e-mail whenever a new update is available on our website. If there is a change in the "Support Files" password we'll provide you with the new password in the e-mail.

Once you've downloaded the Zip file that contains the new enhancement, make sure that it is in either your ComTrac or POS20 directory, depending on what program you are upgrading. If you try to install a POS upgrade over your ComTrac software (or vice versa) it'll take a fair bit of work to straighten things out.

Let's use a ComTrac upgrade as our example.

1. Go into DOS (**Start | Programs | MS-Dos**)
2. Change directories from "Windows" to "Comtrac": **cd \comtrac** <enter>, or change directories from "Windows" to "POS20": **cd \pos20** <enter>
3. If your upgrade file was CT30.Zip, enter the command at the Comtrac DOS prompt: **pkunzip ct30** <enter>.
4. When the unzip program warns you that "duplicate files exist", press **A** to overwrite all duplicate files.
5. When the unzip program is done, enter the command **install.bat** <enter>. This will run all the components of the upgrade process, including making a backup of your data before it makes any file structure changes for the upgrade. *(The name of the backup file is CTBACK.ZIP, and can be found in your ComTrac directory. For POS, the name of the backup file will be POSBACK.ZIP and it will be in your POS20 directory).*

If you have problems getting into either ComTrac or POS after following this upgrade process, it is almost certainly due to your PC missing the file Autofix.Exe in ComTrac or POS20, or having an outdated version. You can use either the DOS "dir" command or Windows Explorer to check for the absence of this file. If the file is present, click on it and look at "Properties" to see the file creation date. If the file creation date is earlier than 10/96 you have an outmoded version.

We maintain a file on the website under "System Files" named **Utils.Zip** which contains the most current versions of all the ComTrac/DOS utility programs, including autofix.exe.

Note:
Don't do an upgrade while you have open orders in progress!

8.20. Logging in New Comics & General Mdse from Diamond

There are three ways to log in merchandise from Diamond Comic Dist.

1. Import the weekly text file containing the Diamond invoice. (See our separate cheat sheet for detailed instructions on its use).
2. Use QuickLog to create a spreadsheet that contains every item that's on-order
3. Manually log in items

If you have been using the ComTrac for three months or longer, and have been creating their Diamond orders through ComTrac, we recommend using Option 1, importing the weekly diamond invoice file in text format. Diamond will put two versions of this file into your mailbox on their website: one is a "dat" format file that shows a representation of the invoice as if it came off your printer. The other is a "txt" format file which contains just the data in ascii delimited format - quotes around characters and commas between fields. The 'txt' version can be imported into ComTrac using **Orders|Login/Logout Mdse.**

If you have been writing your orders in ComTrac for some time but aren't ready to try importing your invoice file, you can use the QuickLog import tool to create a spreadsheet that contains an item for every product which is on order. Using your hardcopy invoice you'll search for each item, mark it as having arrived and make any editorial corrections for quantity, price, etc. that are needed.

New users are STRONGLY URGED to use the Manual method of logging in at first. This actually doesn't take much more time than the first two methods, and allows the user to create inventory records "on the fly" for items which aren't in their inventory files.

Here's how it works:

1. Go to **Orders**

2. Select **B-Login/Logout Mdse**

3. Select logging in merchandise by "Store", not "Company"

4. Select "Manually" as the login method.

5. For your first pass through your invoice select "Comics", for the second pass select "Specialties"

6. For either comics or specialties enter the correct log-in date. If you enter the wrong date for your selected login-day-of-the-week, ComTrac will warn you. Re-enter till it's accepted.

7. We recommend logging in by 'Description' when logging in manually.

8. For comics, you'll see a screen with the default store code, and three fields you can work with: Title, Issue, and Qty Rcvd.

9. Enter part of the title, eg: "Mutant Programmers" and press [enter]

10. Enter the issue number, padded with zeroes, eg: '0004'

11. If ComTrac found an exact match, it'll update without comment and put you back in the three prompt fields.

12. If it didn't find an exact match, it'll tell you and ask you whether to "Pick", "Create" or "Quit" If you know you made an error, select "Quit" so as to try again.

13. If you are a new user and you don't select "Quit", you are usually best off to select "Create", which lets you create a stock card/inventory card for the item.

14. If you chose "Create", you'll see the following: Title, Issue, Sku, Publisher, Retail Cost and Cycle Flag. Title and Issue should be filled in for you. If the book has a barcode you can scan it into the Sku field directly. If the book has no bar code, press [enter] to have ComTrac create a unique identifier. Publisher can be left blank. It's validated from the Publisher file in Utilities|A-Maintain Files. Be sure to enter the retail price of the item Cycle flag's default value is **Yes**, and we suggest leaving it that way. When you're done, either press "Enter" at the last field or press "Page Down" to exit to screen.

15. Now you'll see the inventory data screen. You can enter values in shelf weeks, Initial Order, Initial Received, Bin stock, Comments, Adjust and Supress. Shelf weeks tells ComTrac how many weeks you want to keep this book on the shelf as a new comic. Initial order and initial received are the quantities you originally ordered and quantity you actually received. Initial order can be left set to zero. Bin stock is normally zero for most retailers - it accounts for copies ordered specifically for back issue stock. Comments lets you enter information about things that might materially affect sales on this title/issue combination. Eg: "radioactive glow-in the dark cover, sterilizes customers". Leave Suppress set to "N".

16. Either go off the screen by pressing Enter or by pressing Page Down. Now you are back in the login screen and can enter the next item.

This is the fastest and most accurate way of entering new merchandise into ComTrac if you are a new user with partial or incomplete inventory records.

The only differences when logging in specialty (perpetual inventory) items is that you'll be prompted to enter the wholesale cost of the item. This is used to update the average wholesale cost field. If you select "Create", ComTrac asks you for a little more information, such as the ISBN number (which isn't used by 98% of all users). Ignore the Rental fields. The catalog number is the Diamond part # or another distributor's part #. Sale price is obvious, the tax flag should be "Y" if the item is taxeable, "N" if not.

When the screen changes, enter the total quantity available in the first field, including the quantity which arrived today. If this is a totally new item, this figure will be just what arrived in today's shipment. If you're in transition, the value would be what's on the shelf plus what has arrived today.

The Minimum level is the minimum reorder level. If you want to keep this item in stock, this field should have a value of at least "1". In that way when you go out-of-stock it'll appear in your reorder files. Last of all, enter the wholesale cost of the item. It'll appear when the inventory screen disappears.

When you're done logging in your merchandise, press "Escape". You can print your logged in

merchandise to screen, file or printer. If your printer is able to print ComTrac barcodes (as an epson-compatible 24-pin printer or an HP compatible laserjet) go ahead and do so. Otherwise skip it.

8.21. Membership Clubs in ComTrac

Many comics and game retailers organize membership clubs in order to stimulate sales. ComTrac allows you to have three different clubs, or three different levels of the same club.

8.21.1. Preparing in ComTrac

Each Customer in ComTrac's Reserves Customer file must have a "Subscriber Type" code assigned to them if you want to implement a club membership scheme.

Sub Type	"Sub Type" is the field label
I	"I" = in-store subscriber
M	"M" = mail-order subscriber
L	"L" = mailing list entry
Membership Type	"Membership Type" is the field label
Blank	"Blank" is the default legal value for this field - a basic subscriber Be sure to enter the discount value if they are to get a specific discount
S	"S" = subscriber
V	"V" = VIP member
P	"P" = Platinum member
Discount	Enter a subscriber discount for "regular" subscribers who aren't members
Resale #	Enter a resale number for customers who are "wholesale" customers - POS will read the value and know that they are supposed to receive the "wholesale" price for selected merchandise regardless of their "member" status

8.21.2. Configuring POS for Club Membership

Go to the "Options" Menu and select "Store Info". In the "Store Info" configuration screen you will see a check box labeled "Use Dept Sub Discount". Either tab to the box and press the spacebar to select it, it click on it with your mouse. This enables the varying levels of club discounts stored in your POS Department Table.

8.22. Monthly ComTrac Tasks

There are quite a few tasks which fall into the "once-monthly" category. Not all of them are mandatory.

8.22.1. When You Receive Your Comics Order Packs...

8.22.1.1. Load Order Forms

You need to bring your comics distributor electronic order forms into *ComTrac* for ordering purposes. *(Orders, Option-G, "Load Forms")*

8.22.1.2. Zap Order Forms

You should eliminate any stale order forms from earlier months. They just take up valuable hard disk space. *(Orders, Option-G, "ZAP Forms")*

8.22.1.3. Update Sub Title File

If you run a "one-shot" subscriber system, the first order pack you loaded replaced last month's Subscriber Title file. You can update the Subscriber Title file for other distributors with the help of this tool. *(Reserves, Option-B, Option-J)*

8.22.1.4. Make Subscription Form

If you want, *ComTrac* can help you create an order form for your Subscribers. *(Reserves, Option-C, Option-D)*

8.22.2. Comics Ordering-Related Tasks...

8.22.2.1. Analyze Comics Sell-Through

Before starting your monthly comics orders, you may want to check your "Comics Sell-Through" to see whether you are experiencing sell-through problems in any part of your c
omics portfolio. *(New Comics, Option-I)*

8.22.2.2. Copy Current Orders

If you want to create subscription orders for newly solicited titles for every customer who currently has ordered an existing title, this tool will save you time. *(Reserves, Option-B, Option-H)*

8.22.2.3. Upload/Download Files

If you are using a *Remote* system, you will want to Upload your subscriber data to your central computer. If you are using a central computer, you will want to refresh your subscriber files for your satellite stores before ordering. *(Reserves, Option-B, Option-I)*

8.22.2.4. Order Comics

Write your comics distributor orders for comics products which are going to cycle-sheet. If you are a non-POS user or don't track Specialties separately, you can record your Specialty order quantities from this ordering section.. *(Orders, Option-A, Option-A)*

8.22.2.5. Order Specialties

If you track Specialties (or are a POS user) you will want to order Specialty products from this section of *ComTrac* so you can access your inventory data. *(Orders, Option-A, Option-B)*

8.22.2.6. Balance Orders

If you have multiple stores, you may want to conduct a final review of your store-level orders before you post them (and create or update inventory records). This tool will show you what

you've ordered for all your stores for the same item from the same distributor, and will let you change the quantities at each store. *(Orders, Option-E)*

8.22.2.7. Sum Multi-Order

If you have multiple stores and each manager ordered separately, or if you preferred to write individual orders (rather than use the Company-wide ordering option) you can create a summary of all your orders. You can print the summary and also send it to file for electronic submittal to the distributor. *(Order, Option-G)*

8.22.3. Miscellaneous Monthly Tasks...

8.22.3.1. Make Stale Mdse Report

Identify specialty merchandise which hasn't sold in "XX" days. *(Specialty, Option-F)*

8.22.3.2. Re-Price Back Issues

Re-price back issue comics manually.

8.23. Moving ComTrac to a New Computer

There are at least three ways to move ComTrac from one PC to another. You can physically move the hard disk, use a program such as LapLink to transfer files from one hard disk to another, or move ComTrac file-by-file from the old PC to your new PC.

8.23.1. Moving the Hard Disk

If you physically transfer the hard disk from your old PC to a new PC you don't have to re-install ComTrac or enter a new unlock code.

8.23.2. Using LapLink

There are several commercial programs which allow you to move files from one PC's hard disk to another PC's hard disk via your parallel port. **LapLink** is one such program. You can quickly and easily move all or just selected directories or files from the original computer to the new computer. If you use this approach, you will probably have to enter a new unlock code for ComTrac and POS so they will run properly.

8.23.3. Moving ComTrac Manually

If you are going to move ComTrac manually, here's the sequence of tasks:

1. Create the directory COMTRAC on your new PC.

2. Delete all the index files in the COMTRAC directory on your old PC.

Del *.ntx <Enter>

3. Copy the files PKZIP.EXE and PKUNZIP.EXE from your old PCs ComTrac directory and copy them into the ComTrac directory on your new PC. **Copy p*.exe a: <Enter>** to get them onto the diskette when you're in the ComTrac directory on the old PC. **Copy a:*.* <Enter>** to get them onto the new PC's hard disk when you're in the new PC's ComTrac directory

4. Get a stack of formatted floppy disks and label them from #1 to #10.

5. Enter the command **PKZIP A:TRANSFER -&F *.* <Enter>** This will create a multi-diskette copy of your entire ComTrac directory and format your diskettes as you go.

6. Go to your new PCs ComTrac directory and enter the command: **PKUNZIP A:TRANSFER** Pkunzip will ask you to put your last diskette of your backup series into the floppy drive and press <Enter>. Do so. Then put the first disk back in when prompted to do so and press Enter again. Feed disks until the backup process is completed.

7. Load ComTrac by typing **ComTrac** at the ComTrac DOS prompt. ComTrac will rebuild all the missing index files automatically for you. You may need to enter a new unlock code when the index process is complete.

8.24. Moving Data Between Your Store and Home Office

Many ComTrac users routinely move data to and from a Store PC and a Home PC. Here's how to do it, as well as some comments on potential pitfalls.

8.24.1. Moving Data - No POS Data

We'll assume that you're starting with data on your store PC.

Go to **Exit System|A-Create Backup**. Follow the instructions to create one or more backup disks. Most ComTrac users will only need one diskette to backup their system since only DBF and DBT files are used. Be sure to label your diskettes so you know which one is Disk #1, Disk #2, etc. if you need multiple disks.

When at home, go into ComTrac and go to **Exit System|B-Restore Backup**. Put Disk #1 into your diskette drive and start the backup process. If you have multiple diskettes, you'll be asked to put the last disk in your backup series into the diskette drive. Then you'll be asked to put Disk #1 back in.

If you only have one backup disk you'll still be prompted for "first" and "last" disks. Just keep your single backup disk in the drive and press the "Enter" key as needed.

When you are finished with the backup, go to **Utilities|C-Index Files** and select "All" files. Now you're ready to begin work.

When you are finished working at home, go to **Exit System|A-Create Backup** on your home PC to create a transfer file that will go to your Store PC.

Back at the store, go to **Exit System|B-Restore Backup** and follow the same procedure to restore your data and reindex your files.

Cautions:

If possible, don't let your employees make changes on the Store PC when you are working at home. If they do make changes, they'll be overwritten when you restore from your Home PC! If employees need to record changes, have them fill out forms (**not** scraps of paper) which can be entered into the Store PC when you have restored your Home PC's data.

If you must keep your data at home for an extended period of time (such as when you are writing your monthly comics order), you can let your store staff modify the in-store subscriber (folder) data. What you need to do is use the Mass Export feature in the store copy of ComTrac to update your Home PC with their subscriber data.

The command structure is **Reserves|I-Upload/Download Files.** Enter the Import and Export file paths in the dialogue box. Select **B-Mass Export** to write all your subscriber files to diskette. Then take the transfer diskette to your Home PC and go through the same command path except that you would select **A-Mass Import** to bring the transferred data back to your Home PC.

If you have been updating your Home PC with fresh Store PC subscriber/folder data, just use the **ComTrac Backup/Restore** commands to create an update data disk for the Store PC from your Home PC. You don't need to use "Mass Export/Import", as the regular Backup/Restore commands will bring over all your subscriber/folder information along with your other data.

8.24.2. Moving Data - Including POS Data

The key to successful data manipulations with POS and ComTrac is to designate one PC as the Master PC and enforce the rule! This means that **all data flows downhill** from your off-site or home PC to the store PC. The only exception to this would be subscriber/folder data, which can go uphill from the store to the home PC via mass export. And, of course, your daily POS sales files go to your home PC for inventory updates.

Everything else (including inventory updates and logging in) happens on the home/office PC.

What this means is that when merchandise comes to the store, you and your staff check the invoices for accuracy and note any changes in price or quantity on the invoice. Then the actual log-in takes place on the main PC when it is convenient.

8.24.2.1 Data from Store to Office/Home

Here's the data that travels from your Store to your Office or Home:
Daily - sales export files
Weekly - subscriber/folder data via Mass Export/Mass Import

8.24.2.2 Data from Office/Home to Store

Heres the data that travels from your Office or Home to your Store:
Daily or weekly - PluTable.Zip (whenever you add new items to your inventory in ComTrac)
Daily or weekly - LookupFl.Zip (whenever you have multiple stores and want to modify your company-wide Inventory lookup table in ComTrac)
Occasionally - Depament.Dbf (whenever you update your department table in ComTrac)

8.24.3. Back Up - Back Up

Back up regularly at the store and at your office or home. If you have an attack of carelessness you will have a fighting chance to recover with enough recent and complete back ups.

Rotate back ups over at least three disks or sets of disks. Disks eventually develop bad sectors and have to be reformatted. If a bad sector is right in the middle of a file (such as your Specialty Inventory file) you won't be able to restore the data in tht file. Make a backup at least once a month that you take and put in a safe location. Ideally you want backups at your home/office and at your store location. If you have a disaster at one place, you'll still have a decent backup to work from.

All of this applies to backups made onto Zip disks, tape or other high-density media.

Note:
Data backups made to CD-ROM set the attribute of all files to "Read-Only". If you restore data from a CD-ROM backup, you will have to reset the attributes of all restored files. Go into Windows Explorer and navigate to the ComTrac folder. Left-click on the first file, then go to the last file in the window and Shift-left-click to select it and all files displayed between the first and last file. Then right-click to get to a menu and select ***Properties****. Once you are in the properties screen you can deselect the Read-Only attribute.*

8.25. Operational Considerations

8.25.1. Weaving ComTrac Into Your Business

Purchasing and using *ordering and inventory control* software isn't like getting a clothes dryer, plugging it in and using it right away. Not only must you load all your inventory data into *ComTrac*, but you need to fit it into the way you *operate* your business.

The idea that you have a distinctive style of *operation* is going to be a new idea for many comics retailers. But even if you've never thought about the implications of *how* you choose to operate your business, your choices have defined an *operational style* for you.

The purpose of this material is to discuss some of the major issues connected with *ordering and inventory control* and to try and shed some light on the impact of choices which you are going to make. You are welcome to call us if you are in support and discuss these issues with us. We do ask your consideration if you call us at a particularly busy time when our support lines are dealing with more technical questions.

8.26.2. New Comics Management Issues

The major New Comics/Periodicals management issues center on three major topics: how much information do you want to retain if you are operating ComTrac in manual mode, what sell-through levels should you try to reach, and how best can you identify growing or decaying titles before they become crises.

8.26.2.1 Short Cycle or Full Cycle?

If you are a ComTrac-POS user you can pass over this discussion. ComTrac automatically updates your periodicals inventory and summarizes sales data by individual day and by week. of sale.

If you are using ComTrac-Lite you need to consider whether you want to track our comics or periodicals sales by individual weeks or whether you just want to track first-and-last-week sales.

The most important information to have in managing comics ordering is your First-Week sales and Last-Week inventory information. ComTrac will assist you in developing and using this information from your cycle sheet entries.

8.26.2.2 First-Week Sales

First-Week sales information can give you valuable insights into whether a book has been over- or under-ordered. Depending on your distributor ship date and when you prefer to count your comics inventory every week, your first "week" may very well be less than seven days in length. Common First-Week lengths are 2-4 days. ComTrac knows how to allow for this adjustment. POS users really don't have to worry about this, although the convention is useful when analyzing sales.

If you have 90-100% sell-through in the first "week", you have probably under-ordered the book and need to think about finding more copies for your customers. If you have less than 25-35% sell-through in the first "week", you have probably over-ordered the book and will be stuck with extra copies which may never sell in your Back Issue bins.

The First-Week-Comics-Sales Report will give you information about your comics sales by individual title, including each titles' performance over the three previous issues so you can spot any changes in behavior.

NOTE:
If you choose the Short-Cycle Option, you'll get First-Week-Sales and Last-Week-Inventory data for every comics title. You will only have to count books that are in the first and last week of their assigned cycle periods.

8.26.2.3 Last-Week Inventory

Your last-week inventory count tells you what your Sell-Through Rate was. Your total sell-through measures how effectively you ordered and promoted each title, and is a measure of profitability.

If you are a comics retailer who does not discount your comics and have a 50-off discount on comics from their comics distributors, on the average you can generate a 15% pre-tax profit on your comics products with an average sell-through of 90%.

If your comics sell through is 75% with the same assumptions, you are likely to break even. And if you have less than a 75% sell-through on comics you are probably losing money on this merchandise line.

You may respond, "but I'm staying in business!". Yes, you may be staying in business because you are making money on other non-comics merchandise that you carry and comics can provide good cash-flow even when they're not profitable --- at least for a short time. But how often have other retailers that you know taken money from another source and used it to pay off their back bills? That's re-capitalizing a business, and if you don't aim for 90% average sell-through on your comics, that's what you'll eventually have to do as well!

When you order comics through ComTrac, you'll see your sell-through levels for each issue on the ordering screen. ComTrac will use this information to recommend an order for you. You should review your sell-throughs by issue when ordering a title to see if there have been any sales trends, whether up or down. Always remember that you are ordering 60-90 days in advance, depending on the title and publisher!

NOTE:
But if you are a multi-store retailer, you will find it very, very difficult to transfer comics between stores! Multi-store retailers SHOULD NOT use the Short-Cycle option. You also lose valuable insights into how your comics are performing while they are on the shelf. That information can help you identify growing titles or titles which are starting to decay.

8.26.2.4 Ordering to Sell Out

The retail comics business has completely changed in the last decade. It used to be that comics retailers generated cash-flow from comics and made their major profits on marked-up back issues. This meant that ordering to sell out really wasn't very important. Those days are gone forever, unless you have decided to emphasize the back-issue niche market in your community. For most comics retailers that's not a viable option.

Ordering to sell out means trying to order just enough product to satisfy your subscriber base and the regular news-stand purchasers. Ordering to sell out means being willing to chase extra copies of an unexpectedly popular issue of a comic rather than trying to figure out how to move extra copies from over-ordering.

Ordering to sell out also implies that having two stores gives you a strategic advantage over all your single-store competitors. If you have two stores, you can order very tightly on a company-

wide basis and transfer merchandise between stores. We'll discuss this more fully later on.

8.26.2.5 Identifying Growing or Decaying Titles

An important job that is often overlooked by comics retailers when they manually cycle sheet their comics is identifying titles which are beginning to grow or which are showing signs of decay. Since ordering comics is a continual test of skill in ordering 60-90 days before publication, identifying books which are changing their sales status can have a major impact on your sales and profitability.

Even when comics distributors have implemented electronic ordering to the point where you can reliably change your orders up to two week prior to publication, being able to identify changing titles will be very important.

8.26.2.6 Changes in Subscriber Patterns

One of the more reliable ways in getting warning that a formerly reliable title is starting to lose its appeal with your customers is to monitor your subscriber patterns. ComTrac saves your subscriber count at the moment you write your comics order, and modifies the subscriber count again when you receive the book and log it into your system.

This means that once you've been using ComTrac for a while, you'll have an eight-issue history on how your subscribers have been ordering this book! It's easy when you're writing your order in ComTrac to identify an upward or downward sales trend when the data is laid out in an effective manner for you.

8.26.2.7 Rapid Sell-Through for Small-Count Titles

Another indicator of growing interest in a title is found when you have a product where you normally are ordering 10 or fewer copies. If you find that you are consistently selling-out of this book in the first, second or occasionally third week of its cycle period; that's usually your cue to increase your order by 1-2 copies. Continue nudging your order quantities up each issue until you begin to have 1-2 extra copies. Then drop the order quantity down 1-2 copies and wait for future events.

8.26.2.8 Lengthening Sell-Through for Small-Count Titles

If you have consistently sold through by week two for a small-count title and the time required to sell-through is beginning to lengthen, you should take this as a warning that customer interest in this item is beginning to drop. ou can spot this kind of trend visually when you order the book through ComTrac. Train yourself to look for lengthening sell-through periods when multiple cycle-sheets are on the screen during the ordering process.

8.26.3. Subscriber Management Issues

Comics retailers traditionally offer Subscription Services to their customers. The original reasons for offering this service were attracting new, large customers and to simplify the monthly comics order.

Providing Subscription Services is an expensive process. The retailer must take Subscriber orders, collate them monthly as part of the ordering process, figure out which customers are to receive products every New Comics Day, etc.etc. Besides these problems, the rate of Subscribers failing to pick up products which they've ordered has increased in recent years, just at the time where comics retailers can least afford to absorb additional losses.

Most comics retailers still don't understand that giving Subscribers a 20% discount is the equivalent of spending 40% of their gross profit on marketing if they have been getting a 50% discount on their new comics from their comics distributor. How many single-store retailers are going to get 50% off from their current comics distributors? A 20% discount when you are getting "40 off" is equivalent to 50% of the gross profits on these books. Add in your cost of labor, inventorying, etc. and you have got to think about whether you can afford to continue giving heavy discounts to your subscribers.

We know that most comics retailers have several competitors, and that you are concerned that you'll lose the major part of your subscriber base if you discontinue or reduce your subscriber discounts. We can work with you to determine whether you can modify or discontinue your subscriber discounts, or whether substituting other (less expensive) goods and services for your current subscriber discount.

Your decisions about what Subscriber Services you are going to provide, and how you are going to be paid for providing them, can have a major impact on your profitability.

8.26.3.1 Pay-as-you-Go or Prepaid Subscriptions

Some comics retailers are moving in the direction of full or partial pre-paid subscriptions. This practice protects them against customers failing to pick up their merchandise promptly, or not picking it up at all. This practice also helps prevent customers from ordering more product than they can really afford. Offering a discount also becomes more palatable economically if you have the use of the customer's money for a minimum of two months before your distributor bill comes due.

8.26.3.2 One-Shot or Standing Order Systems

The other major decision which a comics retailer needs to make about their Subscription Service is whether to make the majority of their customers place orders every month, or whether they will accept "standing orders" for repeat titles.

If I, for example, ask you to order me Larry Marder's Beanworld whenever Larry gets around to putting an issue out, that's a standing order. On the other hand, if you tell me that I have to put in separate monthly orders for Steroid Man #1, #2, #3. The advantage of making subscribers place unique orders every month is that it keeps you in touch with them, and helps prevent over-ordering. The penalty is that your data-entry load will be significantly larger than if many of your customers are on a standing order basis.

If the majority of your customers place standing orders with you, your data entry workload will be reduced as you will only have to deal with "adds" and "drops". On the other hand, you will have to monitor your customer's orders to make sure that they are not ordering more merchandise than they can afford.

8.26.3.3 Special Orders/One Time Orders

ComTrac provides you with assistance in processing special or one-time orders. A good example of this is the Sandman statuette, which retailed for $135.00. Rather than set up an order as for a regular comic book, we believe that it's better to enter it through the special/one-time order sub-module.

This allows you to take deposits and lay-away payments, and the orders will automatically be captured by ComTrac when you write your monthly distributor order. When you flag this item as having arrived, ComTrac will tell you how much money your customer still owes you.

8.26.3.4 Want Lists

One of the more valuable services which you can provide your customers is maintaining a Want List which contains products which they want but cannot find. When you (or one of your staff) are going to attend a comic-con, retailer sales conference, etc. print out your Want List by several formats (eg: Product Group, Description) and take it along.

8.26.3.5 Ordering Comics

Ordering new comics is difficult. Anyone who tells you that this isn't true just doesn't know what they're talking about. With lower gross profits due to increased shipping costs (not to mention lower discounts as well in many cases) tight comics ordering has changed from being desirable to being absolutely necessary for survival.

ComTrac thinks about comics orders the same way that most experienced comics retailers do. It tries to answer three questions about each title and issue:

- how many copies do I need to keep my subscribers happy?
- how many copies do I need for the shelf? (or "rack" or "newsstand")
- how many copies do I need for my recent back issue bins?

8.26.3.6 Subscribers

The first thing which ComTrac does is check your Subscriber Module to see how many standing orders and one-shot orders there are for the title and issue you're ordering. The total is displayed on the ordering screen as "Pullhold".

The total number of subscriber copies which have come into your store for the previous issues of the book you are ordering are displayed on the screen before you. This means that if there is any subscriber trend you will be able to easily spot it. For example: if there's been a slow, steady increase in subscriber sales over the last 6-8 issues, you should consider increasing your order.

8.26.3.7 Newsstand Sales

ComTrac then figures out how many newsstand copies you are likely to sell. Again, you may want to adjust this figure up or down depending on trends over the last 6-8 issues. (We are also assuming that there's nothing unusual about this issue, such as story content, guest artist, etc.)

8.26.3.8 Back Issue Copies

It may seem heretical in this day and age to suggest ordering extra copies for your back issue section, especially when "ordering to sell out" has finally won wide acceptance. (Even if most retailers aren't succeeding in doing this). Our rationale is that in most areas there are 20-30 comics titles which have fairly strong back issue sales for the most recent twelve issues. If you know that you are ordering tightly over the range of comics titles which you customarily stock (meaning that you have an overall sell-through-rate of 90%) you can over-order these key titles by 2-3 copies. This will give you sufficient bin stock to carry you through to when used copies start coming in from customers at 10-20¢ per book.

- *Reorders*

Cutting your initial comics order to the absolute minimum becomes even more desirable if your comics distributor provides adequate "advance order" services. You can use ComTrac to check your Subscriber Module on a weekly basis to see whether any title that's on-order has had a significant increase in subscriber orders since your original order or the last re-order. If it has, then you need to send in an "advance order" for additional copies of that issue. And if there's evidence of increased customer interest in a title's issue in the six weeks between your initial order and the "advance order" cutoff date you should also boost your original order.

8.27.4. Ordering Specialties

Specialties or sidelines have become far more important to comics retailers than anyone would have dreamed back in 1985. Back then, the typical comics shop derived perhaps 10 to at most 20% of their volume from sidelines. These days, high-end comics shops often get 50-70% of their sales from sidelines, even while selling more comics by dollar volume than ever before.

Comics retailers have found that adding to their overall volume by agressively promoting compatible sidelines have enabled them to afford more expensive, high-visibility store locations. These superior locations have resulted in higher dollar volumes of comics sales as well as higher overall sales.

Another reason why sidelines have become much more common is that since they are "perpetual inventory" merchandise which can be re-ordered they tend to smooth out the big up and down cycles associated with comics sales. Comics have the unique ability of attracting customers into your store on a weekly basis, which gives you the opportunity to expose customers to your related sidelines products.

8.27.4.1 Ordering Specialties from a Comics Distributor

In our opinion, ordering specialty or sideline products from a comics distributor is sensible only when:

- you don't have the time or initiative to seek out alternative sources of supply
- you can't get a better price from another source

In general, most comics distributors have done poorly at providing sidelines products, as they have been locked into the "fast-freight forwarder" comics mentality. Sidelines require a major inventory investment, a major commitment to efficient warehouse staff and procedures and require that comics distributors become competitors to well-established distributors in other fields.

This is why sidelines haven't been very attractive to comics retailers till recently. With the upheavals in the comics distribution marketplace, the only way surviving distributors can regain their former sales volumes is to market sidelines products aggressively. We have already seen substantial drops in price for sports cards and game products at both Capital City and Diamond, and expect to see additional changes in both price and product availability.

The conventional wisdom has been that almost any comics retailer could get better prices, terms, order fulfillment and breadth of product from a non-comics specialty distributor. In fact, the average multi-store comics retailer has maintained between 30-50 vendors apart from their primary comics distributor. Smaller comics retailers have established relationships with 15-25 vendors. .

As with everything, there is no free lunch. There's real convenience in "one stop shopping", and there's a price associated with the benefits many comics retailers perceive in shopping from a multitude of vendors.

8.27.4.2 Ordering Specialties from a Specialty Distributor

ComTrac supports ordering specialties or sidelines from a non-comics specialty distributor. If you place a "Direct Order" through the Specialties Ordering function you can have ComTrac generate a trial order for any item in a specified department or group of departments. You can modify this order manually within ComTrac and then fax or phone it in to your specialty distributor.

Any backstocked or out-of-stock items can be zeroed out in your ComTrac order, and then posted. Making sure that new items are included in your order requires that you create Stock Cards for these items with minimum inventory levels and having zero inventory. This guarantees that these items will be included in your specialties direct order.

8.27.4.3 Ordering Specialties from a Manufacturer/Publisher

There are times where you will need to order directly from a manufacturer or publisher. You can do this within ComTrac just as you can order directly from a non-comics distributor.

8.27.4.4 Company-Wide Ordering vs. Store Ordering

One of the reasons why there are so few successful multi-store comics retail companies is the ordering barrier. Until the development of ComTrac, every store needed an employee who could write a monthly comics order. With earlier versions of ComTrac, one person at a central location could write orders for each store, since all the data for every store is kept on the central administrative PC.

This still isn't sufficient for larger companies. Company-wide ordering is, in our opinion, the optimal way for companies with two or more stores to order product. Even if you do not maintain a central warehouse and have your comics or other distributors ship directly to each store in your company you should seriously consider company-wide ordering.

8.27.4.5 The Law of Large Numbers

A fundamental premise of statistics is that as your sample set increases, the accuracy of statistical results based on that data also increases. If you are ordering a large-quantity title such as X-Men your order is likely to be fairly accurate on a single-store basis. But ordering a small-quantity title such as Cerebus or Strangers in Paradise is another matter entirely.

Random monthly fluctuations in customer sales could result in anything from your selling-out by the third week the book was on the shelf to having 1-2 copies left over. Having 1-2 copies left over isn't trivial, because that can represent 50-65% of the units which you ordered. Multiply that by 40-60 titles and you can lose a significant amount of money.

On the other hand, if you have three stores you aren't trying to order 2-4 copies per store, you're ordering 8-10 copies for the entire company. While small fluctuations in sales will always occur on the store level, company-level sales variations will be minimal as the store-level fluctuations tend to cancel out. Instead of 1-2 copy variations on the store level, you're looking at 1-3 copy variations on the company level. That's a much better situation.

8.27.4.6 I Don't Have a Central Warehouse

If you don't choose to run a centralized warehouse, have ComTrac help you break down your company-wide order to store level. Have your largest store receive slightly more product than your satellite stores.

8.27.4.7 No Free Lunches!

The price that you pay for company-wide ordering is that while you are far more likely to order correctly at the company level, you are going to have unplanned deficits or surpluses at the stores. This means you are going to have to transfer merchandise from store to store.

There's never a free lunch. If you don't want lots of unsold product at each store, you're going to have to move product from store to store within your company. The cost of transport is a lot less than absorbing the cost of unsold product.

8.27.4.8 Company-Wide Ordering & POS

Company-wide ordering is most efficient when paired with Point-of-Sale (POS) registers at each store. At the end of every day the central office knows what the inventory status is across the entire company, and can generate transfers, etc. at will.

Without POS, the central office is dependent on store managers initiating transfers and can only log in transfers after they occur --- a much less efficient practice.

8.28. Quarterly ComTrac Tasks

8.28.1. Make Quarterly Sales Report

Create Specialty sales report. Analyze product sales to determine whether to increase or shrink representation. *(Specialty, Option-I)*

8.28.2. Create Back Issue Want List

Create "want list" before attending conventions, etc. *(BakIssue, Option-C, Option-B)*

8.28.3. Back Issue Inventory List

Create "catalog" of back issues for customers. *(BakIssue, Option-C, Option-C)*

8.28.4. Purge Inventory

We recommend that *ComTrac* users purge their comics cycle sheet file every quarter, once they have accumulated a year's data. This tool lets you purge all or selected items.
(Utilities, Option-F)

8.29. Retrieving a Posted ComTrac Order

Sometimes you will need to retrieve your ComTrac order to Diamond Comic Dist. after it has been posted. ComTrac automatically makes a backup of your most recent posted order to Diamond, which can be retrieved and worked with.

1. Go to your ComTrac DOS prompt.
2. Enter the command **dir storecode-DIAM.* [enter]**, eg: **S1DIAM.***
3. You should see at least one file with an "ARC" extension
4. Check the date stamp on the file to make sure that it's compatible with the order you want
5. Copy the file to a DBF format, eg: **copy S1DIAM.ARC S1DIAM.DBF [enter]**
6. Go into ComTrac
7. Go to **Utilities|A-Maintain Tables|Ordering Tables|Open Orders**

8. Look for an entry that matches your recently posted order. For example, if you are recovering the August 1998 order pack, look for 'August 1998' in the Order Form Description field and "DIAM" and "S1" in the distributor and store fields.

9. If you don't see it, use the "add" command to create an entry for your deleted order form

10. Now go to **Orders|Order Merchandise|Order Comics|Manual|Store** and select the "Existing" order form option, select the order from the selection window and go on with your work.

DO NOT POST THIS ORDER AGAIN WHEN YOU'RE DONE WITH IT!!!

When you are done with printing, exporting, etc. your order, go to **Orders|Order Merchandise|Delete Order in Progress** and select this order from the selection window. This will kill off the order before you can accidentally cause problems by opening and posting it another time

8.30. Removing ComTrac/POS Copy Protection

Every once in a while your computer's hard disk controller or a power-line glitch may damage the ComTrac copy protection files. If this happens your copy of ComTrac or POS will revert to Demo Mode and any unlock code we give you won't "stick". Here's how to fix this.

Depending on whether your problem is with ComTrac or POS, go to your **COMTRAC** or **POS20** DOS prompt. Then enter the following commands:

1) **del printdef.sys [Enter]**
2) **attrib copypro.sys -h -s -r [Enter]**
3) **attrib hdlock.sys -h -s -r [Enter]**
4) **del copypro.sys [Enter]**
5) **del hdlock.fil [Enter]**

Now you can call ComTrac Tech Support for an unlock code and it'll "stick". Always be sure to exit from ComTrac or POS after you've entered your new unlock code and then re-load the program to make sure this works. Your ComTrac Tech Support person should wait will you test that everything is correct!

Note:
We've put extra spaces between words in the above commands so that you can see more easily where the spaces exist. There aren't any spaces between the last part of a command line and pressing the <Enter> key.

Or:

*Go to **My Computer** and navigate to the ComTrac or POS20 folder. Make sure your PC is set so you can see hidden files. Then find and delete the files listed above.*

8.31. Running ComTrac/POS Under Windows 95/98

To determine how far down this list you need to go, click on the Start button, move up to Programs, then click on MS-DOS **Prompt.** The familiar C:> prompt should appear. Type **MEM,** then press **Enter.** Look for a line that says **Largest executable program file.** If the number to the right is less **than 600K** you will need to complete steps 1 through 9.

If you have more than 600K, you only need to complete steps 1 through 3.

To return to Windows, type **EXIT.** then press.

1. Click the right mouse button ("right-click") on the Windows Desktop (anywhere there is no icon). A menu will appear. Click the left mouse button (left click) on New, then click on **Shortcut.** The Create Shortcut wizard will start.

2. The first thing you need to fill in is the Command Line. If ComTrac is installed on drive C:, type: **C:\COMTRAC\COMTRAC.Exe** then click on the Next button.

3. Now you need to Select a name for the shortcut. Type the following: ComTrac, then click on the Finish button. You may stop here if you have at least 600K of free memory in DOS, as we checked in the first paragraph.

4. At this point, you should have a shortcut on your Windows Desktop called ComTrac. Right-click on the ComTrac shortcut and a menu will appear. Click on Properties, and the ComTrac Properties window will appear.

5. Across the top of the **ComTrac Properties** window. you will see some Tabs. These Tabs are labeled **General, Dates, Program, Font, Memory, Screen, and Misc.** Click on the Program Tab, then click on the Advanced... button.

6. The **Advanced Program Settings** window will appear. Click on the checkbox labeled **MS-DOS mode.** An AX" should appear next to MS-DOS mode and some additional options will be enabled.

7. Now click on **Specify a new MS-DOS configuration.** The two small text areas labeled **CONFIG.SYS for MS-DOS mode** and **Autoexec.Bat for MS-DOS mode** will now be enabled.

8. Click the mouse in the **CONFIG.SYS** area below the line that says **Device=C:\WINDOWS\Himem.Sys.** The text cursor should now be flashing below that line. Type the following: **DEVICE=C:\WINDOWS\EMM386.EXE**, then click the OK button.

9. You will be returned to the ComTrac Properties window. Click the OK button.

That's all there is to it! Isn't Windows easy? If you completed steps 1 through 9, when you click on the ComTrac shortcut, you will be warned that This program is set **to run in MS-DOS mode... blah blah blah.** Click on the Yes button and Windows will restart in MS-DOS mode and run ComTrac. When you shut down ComTrac, your computer will restart and Windows will reload. If you only did steps 1 through 3, ComTrac will start under Windows. If the window in which ComTrac is running doesn't fill the screen, press **Alt + Enter** and the window will switch to Full Screen mode. This should get you started. If you have any other about questions about Windows, please call Bill Gates.

8.32. StartSub Utility Instructions

StartSub is a utility which we wrote to make the process of implementing the Subscriber module in ComTrac quicker and easier.

Installing StartSub is easy. Once you've installed your regular ComTrac program take the StartSub installation disk and put it into your diskette drive. Change over to your diskette drive (eg: A: or B:) and enter the command "Install" and press the "Enter" key. Follow the program prompts during the course of the StartSub installation program. The default directory for StartSub is **COMTRAC**.

Loading StartSub is easy. Go into DOS (if you use Windows 95/98 you can go into an MS-DOS window, you don't have to reboot your PC into DOS Mode) and change to the ComTrac directory. At the ComTrac DOS prompt (eg: C:\COMTRAC>) enter the command "startsub" and press the "Enter" key. The "startsub" command can be in any combination of upper and lower case - your computer doesn't care.

When you load StartSub you'll see a reminder screen telling you about using StartSub. If you haven't created your Reserve Title File (or haven't copied a starter file that we can give you) you shouldn't be running StartSub yet. If you haven't entered minimum information into ComTrac about each Folder customer you should not be running StartSub.

Once you have created your Reserve Title File and have entered minimum information about each Subscriber, load StartSub.

You have two options in creating your Subscriber orders. If you have your orders on paper by Title (that is, all the customers who have ordered that title) choose the Customer-by-Title option. If you have your orders on paper by Customer (that is, all the titles that a specific customer has ordered) choose the Title-by-Customer option. If you have recorded your Subscriber orders both ways, we suggest using Customer-by-Title as the easiest and quickest way to use StartSub.

You don't have to enter all your customer orders in one session. Be sure to make a note where you've broken off work so that you don't accidentally create duplicate entries for a customer.

Remember that we use the Plus key to checkmark customers or titles in the selection window. If you don't checkmark any customers or titles you won't create any orders in the Subscriber Order file.

8.33. Subscribers: Get Them Up and Running

We always tell our users that getting their Subscription or Hold Service module up and running is the best way to get started in using ComTrac. It doesn't take long to get going, and the positive results will be almost immediate. If we haven't had electronic subscription data which we converted into ComTrac format for you, here's what to do.

8.33.1. Enter Your Store Code into ComTrac

Before you start entering customers or orders, make sure that you have an entry for the store you want to work with in the Store File. Go to **Utilities | A-Maintain Tables | A - Folder Tables | A - Store File**. If there isn't an entry for your store, create it by using the "Add" command.

It's also a good idea go to **AD - Special Interests**" in the same submenu and make sure that there's an entry with a blank special interest code and the label "Blank" or "None" in the description field. This lets you enter Customers who don't have any special interest codes without many extra keystrokes.

Finally, go to **Utilities | D - Set System Values | Store Info** and check the value for the field "Use Reserve Slot #". Unless you really want to use customer slot numbers, make sure that this value reads "N". If you are unsure, enter "N". Computers make tracking customers by name much easier than when using manual systems, and names are much more meaningful to everyone than just a numeric code.

8.33.2. Now you are ready to start entering customers.

1. Go to **Reserves | A-Maintain Files | B-Maintain Customers**. ComTrac will probably tell you that there are no customers. Press "A" for "Add".

2. Enter the store code in the store field. If you don't remember, press **Enter** and a drop down box will appear with your stores. Select the correct store and it'll appear in the field.

3. The default value for Subscription Type is "I". Leave it alone for "In-Store Customers". "M" is for "Mail Order Customers" and "L" is for people who are only on your "Mailing List"

4.Leave "Membership Type" empty unless you are using POS and have a multi-level membership scheme. You can assign groups of customers to a membership type later if you implement this feature at a later date. (*See the Club Members cheat sheet)*

5. Enter "N" for the Rental Customer field unless you are using POS and are going to use the built-in game/video rental module. You can assign groups of customers to rental status later if you implement rentals at a later date.

6. The "Entered Date" will be today's date. Leave it be unless you know when they became a member or subscriber.

7. Enter the Discount (eg: '10' for '10%') if the customer gets a discount.

8. Leave the Membership Number blank. Most users rely on the Customer Code which is assigned automatically by ComTrac.

9. Enter the customer's last name, and then their first name.

10. Press "PageDown" twice to exit the screen.

11. Press “Y”es (the default value of the Exit prompt box) to save changes.

Now you can enter your next customer. Notice that ComTrac has assigned a customer code for you.

8.33.3. Preparing the Reserve (Subscriber) Title File

You must have data in the Reserve Title File before you can start entering subscriber orders. (That ensures that all the ordering information is as consistent as possible).

If we haven't provided title file data for you as part of a data conversion, you'll have to make sure that the current Diamond monthly order form has been imported into ComTrac. *(See the cheat sheet on Importing the Diamond Order Form).* Once you've imported the current Diamond order form, go to **Reserves | B-Perform Jobs | J-Xfer Cmx->Res.**

This tool lets you select a Diamond order form and use it to update your Reserve Title File. Follow the prompts on the screen. When you are done, go to **Reserves | A-Maintain Files | A-Reserve Title File** and you should find a minimum of 300 items in the file.

We suggest when you use Option “J” that you let ComTrac pre-checkmark all the items in the Diamond order form which are “comics”. When the large display window appears that shows all the items in the order form, exit the form without any manual edting and let ComTrac do the heavy lifting.

8.33.4. Now you are ready to enter Customer Orders.

If you have paper documentation showing which customers get an individual title (that is, a list showing a title such as X-Men followed by all the customers who get the book); you can use StartSub to enter this data more quickly than manually entering it through ComTrac. Otherwise, use the following instructions.

12. Go to **Reserves | A - Maintain Files | C - Maintain Orders.**

13. Press “A”dd to add an order.

14. Select the proper store code. If you've been working with the file, the most recently used store code will automatically go into this field.

Hint: Pressing the Control key and the Yes key will delete everything in the field!

15. Enter the first 2-4 characters of the customer's last name. Press [enter] and select the proper customer from the drop down window showing all your customers in alphabetical order.

16. Now you're at the Title field. Enter the first few characters of the title, press [enter] and select the proper title from the drop down window.

17. If your customer wants this title every time it’s solicited, and if they only want one copy of the book, go ahead and press [PageDown] to exit the order record. Press “Yes to save changes.

18. If your customer wants a single issue or a range of issues, enter the starting issue number in the first Issue # field. Press [Enter] and it should re-display with leading zeroes (Eg:

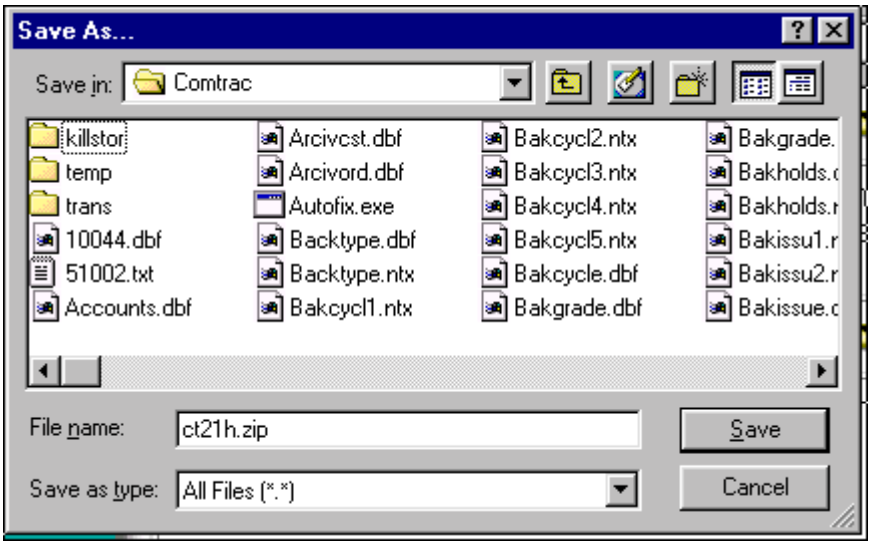
‘0003'). The same value should appear in the ending Issue # field. If the order is for a single issue and for 1 copy, press [PageDown].

19. If the order is for a range of issues, enter the last issue in the ending Issue # field with leading zeroes. (Eg: ‘0010'). That’s it.

8.34. Website: Downloading Files to Your PC

The ComTrac website is found at **www.comtrac.net**, and contains general information about services that we provide our customers, articles, and various files of interest to our users. If you want to download the latest version of ComTrac or POS, select the "What's New" menu option. The first time you select this option in a website session you'll be asked to provide a user id and password through a dialogue box. The user id is always the word "support", entered in lower case without the quotation marks. The password is changed from time to time. If you are in support and have an e-mail address we will automatically send you an e-mail with the changes. If you are not in support or have not received an update notice, call us at **650-579-3624** during our office hours (normally Monday through Friday, 9:00am to 5:00 pm)..

All the files available for download are listed in the "What's New" section, the most recent at the top of the screen. Files that can be downloaded are shown in blue. If you double-click on a download file name you'll see a dialogue box similar to the one shown below this paragraph.



Many users don't know how to download files into the ComTrac directory. Look at the "Save in" window at the top of the "Save as" dialogue box. It currently says "general". If you click on the file folder icon to the right of this window (the icon has an arrow pointing up) you'll move UP through your directory structure,.

When you get to the level which has your ComTrac directory, click on the comtrac directory name which will show in the larger box which shows the contents of the level you are at. Now you can click on the "Save" button and your download file will go right into the ComTrac directory.

We also make documentation available to users on our website. You can either review the information on the screen or download it directly to your printer by clicking on the appropriate item on your screen. The documentation for ComTrac 2.x is available in "printer friendly" format, for example.

8.35. Weekly Tasks

Some weekly tasks are really semi-weekly tasks, that is, they are performed several times each week. Ordering specialty/sideline products in high-volume comics shops are an example of that.

8.35.1. Weekly Comics Sequence: Non-POS Users

8.35.1.1 Make Count Form

Generate manual count form on Comics Count Day (*New Comics, Option-D*)

8.35.1.2 Update Comics Sales

Enter manual comics counts. (*New Comics, Option-C*)

8.35.1.3 Stale Comics Report

Identify comics that should be pulled and haven't. (*New Comics, Option G*)

8.35.1.4 Out-of-Stock-Report

Identify new comics which are out-of-stock. Be sure to transfer or reorder out-of-stock titles. (*New Comics, Option-H*)

8.35.1.5 Re-Order Comics

Re-order fast-selling or out-of-stock comics. (*Orders, Option-A, Option-C*)

8.35.1.6 Transfer Comics

Transfer low or out-of-stock comics to/from stores. (*Orders, Option-C, Option-1*)

8.35.2. Weekly Comics Sequence: POS Users

The weekly comics sequence for POS users isn't much different from the weekly sequence for non-POS users. The only real difference is the number of comics you'll need to manually count every week. With POS you only need to count remaining quantities of books which are being pulled this week so you can generate a shrinkage report.

8.35.2.1 Make Count Form

Generate manual count form on Comics Count Day. This tells you which books are due to be pulled. You also need to count books which are due to be pulled if you want to calculate your comics "shrink" rate. (*New Comics, Option-D*)

8.35.2.2 Update Comics Sales

Enter manual comics counts for books which are being pulled. (*New Comics, Option-C*)

8.35.2.3 Stale Comics Report

Identify comics that should be pulled and haven't. (*New Comics, Option-G*)

8.35.2.4 Out-of-Stock-Report
Generate this report several times each week. Identify new comics which are out-of-stock. Transfer or reorder out-of-stock titles. (*New Comics, Option-H*)

8.35.2.5 Re-Order Comics
Re-order fast-selling or out-of-stock comics. (*Orders, Option-A, Option-C*)

8.35.2.6 Transfer Comics
Transfer low or out-of-stock comics to/from stores. (*Orders, Option-C, Option-#1)*

8.35.3. Weekly Subscriber Sequence

8.35.3.1 Maintain Title/Product File
Add missing titles to Title/Product file. If your subscribers order books which aren't in your Title file, you'll need to add them. Don't delete titles from the Title file. Use "Zap Titles" to eliminate an entire title. (*Reserves, Option-A, Option-A*)

8.35.3.2 Maintain Subscriber File
Add new subscribers to Subscriber file. Dropping customers is done through "Zap Customer". (*Reserves, Option-A, Option-B)*

8.35.3.3 Create Subscriber List
If you operate in non-POS mode and want to check off subscribers as they pick up their weekly orders, create a simple list of subscribers to keep at the register. (*Reserves, Option-C, Option-A, Option-B)*

8.35.3.4 Maintain Reserve Order File
Add new orders to Order file, delete dropped single orders (see "Zap" titles for eliminating an entire title). (*Reserves, Option-A, Option-C*)

8.35.3.5 Dropping Subscribers
Get rid of any customers who are in default, who have moved, etc., along with their orders. (*Reserves, Option-A, Option-D)*

8.35.3.6 Archive/Restore Subscribers
Archive Subscribers who will be resuscitated later, such as students, military, etc. (*Reserves, Option-A, Option-E)*

8.35.3.7 Import Diamond Invoice File
Import the weekly Diamond invoice file into QuickLog. When you exit QuickLog, instruct ComTrac to update Subscribers for New Arrivals. This will flag most comics titles on reserve and will flag all items in the Subscriber order file. *(Orders|Login/Logout|QuickLog)*

8.35.3.8 Update New Arrivals
Let ComTrac know which titles have arrived this week so you can generate Subscriber pull lists. *(Reserves, Option-B, Option-A)*

8.35.3.9 ZAP Customer/Title Orders
If you need to eliminate an entire Subscriber (and their orders) or an entire Title (and all the orders for the title) use this command. *(Reserves, Option-B, Option-F)*

8.35.3.10 Work with Special Orders

Add, drop, modify, record payments for One-Time or Special Orders. *(Reserves, Option-D, Options-A through F as needed)*

8.35.3.11 Recall Subscriber Orders

If any titles were marked as having arrived, and actually did not arrive, use this tool to unmark them so that any single or multi-issue orders won't accidentally be dropped from the computer. *(Reserves, Option-B, Option-L)*

8.35.3.12 Generate Title by Store Summary

Most retailers generate this pull list first, so they can split their arrived comics into two piles: books for subscribers and books for the newsstand.
(Reserves, Option-C, Option-B, Option-A)

8.35.3.13 Generate Title by Customer List

If you pull your books by customer, create this pull report. *(Reserves, Option-C, Option-B, Option-B)*

8.35.3.14 Generate Customer by Title List

If you pull your books by title, create this pull report. *(Reserves, Option-C, Option-B, Option-C)*

8.35.3.15 Update & Report on Subcriber Pickups

If you are a non-POS user and are tracking whether your subscribers are picking up their orders promptly, do this at the end of each week. It will update all your Subscribers Last Pickup Date if they've picked up their orders, and will generate a report listing everyone who is more than "X" weeks late in picking up orders. *(Reserves, Option-C, Option-F)*

8.35.4. Weekly Specialties Sequence

8.35.4.1 Create Inventory Form

If you are a non-POS user and are using ComTrac to control your Specialties, you will have to take a physical countf merchandise. Create this form to take your count. *(Specialty, Option-H)*

8.35.4.2 Enter Specialty Sales

If you are a non-POS user and are using ComTrac to control your Specialty inventory, enter your Specialties sales or inventory count here. *(Specialty, Option-C)*

8.35.4.3 Log-in New SPC Mdse

You must let ComTrac know when you've received new shipments of Specialty merchandise. *(Orders, Option-B)*

8.35.4.4 Make Out-Stock Report

You may want to identify out-of-stock situations before you write orders so you can transfer merchandise. Transferring stock usually is preferable to ordering additional merchandise. *(Specialty, Option-D)*

8.35.4.5 Transfer Specialties

If store managers have already transferred stock, update your inventory to reflect the changes. Initiate any transfers here. *(Orders, Option-C, Option #4)*

8.35.4.6 Create Transfer List
If you have initiated transfers, you must create a Transfer List. *(Orders, Option-E, "Picklist")*

8.35.4.7 Order Specialties
Depending on your store's merchandise mix and sales volume, you will need to generate at least a few specialty orders every week. *(Orders, Option-B)*

8.35.5. Weekly Back Issue Sequence

8.35.5.1 Maintain High-Value Issues
Enter any new High-Value back issue inventory.*(BakIssue, Option-C)*

8.35.5.2 Enter New Common Back-Issue Inventory
Add new Common back issue inventory. *(BakIssue, Option-D)*

Note: You must have at least one entry in the Master Commons Title file for this tool to work properly). Or update generic back issue inventory items in Specialties.

8.35.5.3 Enter Common Sales
If you are a non-POS user, you should enter your Common back-issue sales data, or your current inventories. *(BakIssue, Option-E)*

8.35.5.4 Enter High-Value Sales
If you are a non-POS user, you should enter your High-Value back-issue sales data. *(BakIssue, Option-E)*

8.35.5.5 Transfer from Comics
ComTrac creates entries in a transfer file if you have any copies left when you pull your newsstand comics. You should transfer these books into your Common Back Issue file. *(BakIssue, Option-B, Option-C)*

Add Special Order 15
Adding a DOS Printer to ComTrac 33
Adding Additional Specialties or Comics Inventory 52
Address Tasks 10
Advance Reorder 21
Analyze Cmx Sell-Through Report 5
Analyze Comics Sell-Through 62
Archive Customer Tool 8
Archive/Restore Subscribers 85
Assign Codes 25
Assign Departments to Merchandise 34
Assign Special Interest Codes 12
Assigning Genre Codes to Groups of Products 49
Audit 24
Average Customer Transaction: By Department 42
Average Customer Transaction: Store-Wide 42
Back Issue (Collectibles) Module 19
Back Issue Copies 71
Back Up Your Data 38
BakIssue Grades 27
Balance Drawer 41
Balance Existing Orders 22
Balance Orders 62
Bar-Code Labels 14
Barcode Labels 18
Barcode Labels 20
Best Seller Report 18
Change Product/Custs 11
Change Title 30

Changes in Subscriber Patterns 69
Comics Title Listing Report 5
Company-Wide Ordering & POS 74
Company-Wide Ordering vs. Store Ordering 73
ComTrac Data Entry Conventions 1
ComTrac Main Menu 1
ComTrac Overview 1
Consolidating Sales, &c. 34
Copy Current Orders 11
Copy Current Orders 62
Cost of Goods Sold 43
Create Inventory Form 86
Create PLU 31
Create Subscriber Barcodes 10
Create Subscriber List 85
Create Transfer List 87
Create/Export ComTrac Data 50
Creating Department Codes for ComTrac & POS 34
Creating SPC Entries 17
Creating Subscriber Lists on New Comics Day 35
Creating Your Own Genre Codes 49
Currency File 28
Customer by Title 13
Customer Rental Report 14
Customer Transactions per Week 42
Customers File 7
Cycle Sheet Report 4
Cycling New Comics Sales - Manually and POS 36
Daily ComTrac Tasks 38

Data from Office/Home to Store 66
Data from Store to Office/Home 66
DBU 31
Delete Order in Progress 22
Dept Code File 28
Dept Sales 40
Do Reports 13
Doing an Initial Comics Inventory 51
Doing an Initial Specialties Inventory 52
DOS Printer 29
DOS Shell 32
Dropped Customer File 8
Dropping Subscribers 85
Editing Config.Sys to Add the Dos Memory Manager 39
Eltron Label Printer 47
End-of-Day Closing Routine for POS 40
Enter Bak Sales 19
Enter Common Sales 87
Enter Departments in Department Table 34
Enter High-Value Sales 87
Enter New Bak Inv 19
Enter New Common Back-Issue Inventory 87
Enter Payments 15
Enter SPC Data 17
Enter Specialty Sales 86
Enter Your Store Code into ComTrac 80
Entering Common Back Issue Comics 52
Entering High-Value Back Issue Comics 52
Epson-Compatible Dot Matrix Printers 47

Evaluating Store Performance Ratios 42
Export Sales History File 41
Extract.Exe: Free-form Data Analysis for POS Users 44
Find Expiring Subscribers 10
First-Week Sales 67
Fixing ComTrac & POS Internal Errors 45
Folder Tables 27
Full Customer Listing 13
Generate a Cycle Sheet Count Form 46
Generate Customer by Title List 86
Generate Orders 12
Generate PLU Table 38
Generate Reports 40
Generate Title by Customer List 86
Generate Title by Store Summary 86
Generating Barcodes in ComTrac 47
Generating Genre or Family Codes 49
Genre Codes 27
Getting ComTrac Started 50
Handscan Update 32
Hewlett Packard Laser or Inkjet Printers 47
I Don t Have a Central Warehouse 73
Identifying Growing or Decaying Titles 69
Import Diamond Invoice File 85
Import POS Sales History 38
Import the Diamond Order Forms 51
Index Files 28
Install ComTrac 50
Install POS 50

Inventory Info 29
Inventory Level Report 26
Inventory Turnover Rate 43
Journal Tape 40
Last-Week Inventory 68
Late Rental Report 14
Lengthening Sell-Through for Small-Count Titles 69
Level Stock 24
List Birthdates 10
List Cust/Title Orders 10
Load Order Forms 62
Load/Zap Forms 25
Log in Merchandise 51
Log Out 41
Log-in New SPC Mdse 86
Login/Out Mdse 22
Maintain Common Bak Issue/Maintain Common Bak Iss Inventory 19
Maintain Files Menu 6
Maintain Form 25
Maintain High-Value 19
Maintain High-Value Issues 87
Maintain Master Commons 19
Maintain Orders 16
Maintain Reserve Order File 85
Maintain Subscriber File 85
Maintain Tables 27
Make Count Form 4
Make Count Form 84
Make Count Form 84

Make Mail Labels 10
Make Out-of-Stock Report 17
Make Out-Stock Report 86
Make Spc Inv Form 18
Make Stale Mdse Report 18
Make Stale Mdse Report 63
Make Subscription Form 13
Make Subscription Form 62
Manual Login 23
Manual Updating 36
Master Cat File 28
Misc Info 30
New Comics Module 3
Newsstand Sales 71
No Free Lunches! 74
Normal Order 21
Now you are ready to enter Customer Orders. 81
Now you are ready to start entering customers. 80
Number of Subscribers 42
One-Shot or Standing Order Systems 70
Open Orders File 28
Order Comics 62
Order File 7
Order Form Report 25
Order Mdse 21
Order Specialties 87
Order Specialties 62
Ordering Comics 71
Ordering Specialties from a Comics Distributor 72

Ordering Specialties from a Manufacturer/Publisher 73
Ordering Specialties from a Specialty Distributor 72
Ordering Tables 27
Ordering to Sell Out 68
Orders Module 21
Our Recommendations 48
Out of Stock Report 5
Out-of-Stock-Report 84
Out-of-Stock-Report 85
Pack Files 28
Partial Summary Sub Listing 13
Pay-as-you-Go or Prepaid Subscriptions 70
Perform Jobs Menu 9
Pick Special Orders 15
Picklist 25
POS Cycle Sheeting 37
POS Info 29
Pre-Printed Barcode Labels 48
Preparing the Reserve (Subscriber) Title File 81
Price List 20
Print Reserve Files 14
Print Want List 16
Profitability Report 26
Projects (and Members) 27
Pub/Mfr File 28
Purge Files 30
Purge Late Comics Report 5
Purge Order 16
Purge Want List 16

QuickLog 23
QuickLog with Electronic Invoice 24
Rapid Sell-Through for Small-Count Titles 69
Ratings File 28
Re-Order Comics 85
Re-Order Comics 84
Re-Price Back Issues 63
Recall Subscriber Orders 86
Rental File 8
Rental Information 29
Rental Item Report 14
Rental Prices 28
Rental Report 14
Rental Reports 14
Rental Tables 28
Report Destinations 2
Res Title Pull Report 13
Reserve Customer Report 13
Reserves Module 6
Reset Duplicate Titles 9
Reset End-of-Week 9
Reset SPC Master 18
Sales per Employee-Hour-Worked 42
Sales per Square Foot: By Department 42
Sales per Square Foot: Store-Wide 42
Sales Tax by Dept 40
Sales Update/POS 31
Seiko Ez-30 Label Printer 47
Set Printers 30

Set System Values 29
Short Cycle or Full Cycle? 67
Special Interest Codes 27
Special Interests by Customer 10
Special Order Reports 16
Special Orders 15
Special Orders/One Time Orders 70
Special Topics 33
Specialties Module 17
Stale Comics Report 84
Stale Comics Report 5
Stale Comics Report 84
Store File 27
Store Info 29
Store Summary Sub List 13
Subscriber Bonus Points 40
Subscriber Telephone/E-mail list 10
Subscribers 71
Sum Multi-Order 63
Sum Multi-Order 25
Summary 24
The Department Table 50
The Law of Large Numbers 73
The Store Table 50
Time Clock 40
Title by Customer 13
Title by Store (Summary) 13
Title File 6
Top Comics Seller Report 5

Trans Cmx->Bak 20
Transfer Cmx to Spc 4
Transfer Comics 84
Transfer Comics 85
Transfer Departments to POS 34
Transfer from Comics 87
Transfer Mdse 24
Transfer Specialties 86
Update & Report on Subcriber Pickups 86
Update Comics Sales 84
Update Comics Sales 4
Update Comics Sales 84
Update Master Bak 20
Update New Arrivals 9
Update New Arrivals 85
Update Sub Title File 62
Update/Report Sub Pickups 14
Updating Manual SPC Sales 17
Updating SPC Inventory 17
Upload/Download Files 62
Upload/Download Files 11
Use NC Master List 3
Use SPC Cycle Sheets 17
Use SPC Master List 17
Use Special Interest 12
Use Want List 16
Utilities Module 27
Vendor File 28
Want List 20

Want List 16
Want Lists 71
Work with Special Orders 86
Xfer Comx->Reserves 12
Xfer/Audit Reports 24
ZAP Customer/Title 11
ZAP Customer/Title Orders 85
Zap Order Forms 62
| Option 33